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Justice and Mercy

Marion D. Shutter. D.D.

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JUSTICE AND MERCY

SERMONS ON

Penalty and Forgiveness

BY

REV. MARION D. SHUTTER, D. D.,

AUTHOR OF "WIT AND HUMOR OF THE BIBLE."

BOSTON AND CHICAGO
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JUSTICE AND MERCY.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

SINCE the eight sermons forming the original series were first published, there have been many calls for them, especially in the West and South, in places where new liberal movements were being started. They are now re-issued with as many more upon similar topics, in the hope that they may be useful in an educational way, in places where the doctrines they contain are not familiar.

MARION D. SHUTTER,
(Church of Redeemer, First Universalist.)
MINNEAPOLIS, May 9, 1894.

Dedication:

TO

REV. JAMES H. TUTTLE, D. D.,

THIS VOLUME IS

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY THE AUTHOR.

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I.

THE DISCROWNED KING OF DARKNESS.

[Sunday evening, March 12th, 1893.]

"*Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.*"—JAMES I: 14.

"With the rise of the rationalistic temper throughout Europe in the eighteenth century," says Principal Tulloch, "the belief in the pervading influence of diabolic agency began to disappear. The sense of the supernatural decayed in all directions, especially the old belief in the arbitrary control exercised by an evil power over human destiny. And while the religious impulse has gained greatly since then, and shown renewed vigor, both in an evangelical and catholic direction, it can not be said that the earlier faith in the operations of a personal devil has acquired re-ascendancy."

While it is true that the idea holds, by no means, the place it once did, it is not extinct. It is going, but not quite gone. Men have not entirely given it up. There are those who think that the very foundations would be shaken by its surrender,—that God himself would be hurled from his throne, were Satan ejected from human thought. A recent and justly esteemed *Life of Christ* defends the doctrine of an evil personality

with hosts of minor demons under his banner, and the reality of demoniacal possessions. A revered teacher in one of the leading theological seminaries says: "There must be a revival of belief in a personal devil. Revive faith in the intimacy of the converse of demons with the minds of men to the extent possibly of demoniacal possessions. Picture their power to charm men with fascinating revelations. Reproduce with biblical intensity the great conflict between right and wrong as a conflict between God and Satan."

There is no doubt a popular belief, more or less widespread, that corresponds with this declaration of faith. Satan, as a person,—a huge, fallen archangel, surrounded by and controlling hosts of subordinate demons, is still, to some extent, believed in and feared. Many speak his name with the same reverence they do that of God. A curious illustration may be found in *Cape Cod Folks*. Grandfather Spicer, in a petulant humor, uses the word "devilish." His wife, in calm and awful reproof, says: "I think we've gone far enough for one day. We've broke the Sabbath and took the name o' the Lord in vain, and that ought to be enough for perfessors!" Mr. Conway tells of a lady in England who made her children bow their heads at the name of Satan, as well as at the name of God, because she thought it "safer." There is a story of a peasant

woman in a French church who was found kneeling before a marble group and was warned by the priest that she was worshipping the figure of Beelzebub. "Never mind," she replied, "it is well enough to have friends on both sides."

Thus, even in civilized lands, we may trace a bond of sympathy with the devil-worshippers of Mesopotamia, who recognize the existence of a supreme being, but give their peculiar reverence to Satan. It is hardly too much to say that, even in the theology of the church, the devil has had a larger share of attention than the Almighty.

When we think of the influence this belief has exercised upon the human mind, of its terrible practical results in human history, we must ask, whence came this hideous conception? What has thrown the shadow of the arch-fiend across the sunlight of the ages?

The idea was the growth of centuries. Vast periods rolled between the primitive notions of mankind upon the existence of demons and the full-grown, fantastic devil of the middle ages. To this last, the Vedic descriptions of Vitria's darkness contributed the hues in which he was painted; Greek and German forest-sprites his goat-like body, cloven hoofs and tail; the Scandinavian Thor his red beard and trident; dwarfs and goblins his red cloak and nodding plumes; the theory of metamorphosis the various forms he took. From

different ages and nations were gathered the elements out of which superstition and ignorance and fear formed the satanic being who reigned supreme in the life and thought of Christendom for more than a thousand years.

I wish to trace the origin and development of the idea of a satanic personality, as it appears in Jewish and Christian thought,—borrowing, as we proceed, side-lights from the demonology of other religions.

The idea of a distinct personality of evil, such as the devil of what is called Christian theology, is not to be found in early Hebrew history. Nothing is known of a mighty opponent of Jehovah who disputes with him the supremacy of his own creation. This is a later development. The cardinal principle of Old Testament theology in its first stages that are recorded is that Jehovah was the author of evil as well as of good. He it was, by the representation, who hardened Pharoah's heart, who ordered bloody massacres, who sent forth lying spirits, who tempted Abraham, who sent an evil spirit to trouble Saul, who deceived some of the prophets and then destroyed them because they uttered false oracles, who says, "I create evil," who asks, "shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" In the belief of the Jews when they first come distinctly

upon the stage of history, good and evil were the work of one being and that being Jehovah.

There are traces, however, of belief in minor spirits of evil, "the survival probably," says Tulloch, "in the Hebrew consciousness of fragments of an older native faith which deified the powers of evil as well as of good." One of the most interesting studies imaginable is the tracing of survivals of savagery in Jewish and Christian thought. The cross itself is written over in hideous scrawls, with savage ideas of sacrifice to brutal and malignant deities. But this is foreign to my purpose tonight. In Leviticus, the people are warned not to offer sacrifices to devils; and in Deuteronomy they are charged with having violated the command. All this is distinctly savage. Passages in other parts of the Old Testament show that the Hebrews believed more or less in evil spirits who were supposed to dwell in darkness and in waste places. It would appear from the fact that Jehovah sometimes sends forth evil spirits upon his errands, that these dark existences are under his control. But they are all kept in the background. They are apparently insignificant. No one of them stands distinctly forth as a leader and representative. There is no one who even remotely suggests the after prince of darkness. Not yet has the kingdom of evil come.

The origin of such notions as those I have men-

tioned is, doubtless, the same in the savage state of all peoples. When first the existence of the spirit after death is believed, the savage fancies that the soul of his enemy comes back and works mischief,—setting his hut on fire, destroying his cattle, devastating his fields. This is one source of demons. Then the obstacles against which he has to contend in his labors, each has a demon behind it, making toil a burden and a curse. His very hunger and thirst are caused by adverse spirits. Heat and cold, storm, lightning, flood, hail, are inflictions of unseen malign powers. The very animals that devour or annoy are demons in disguise. The devil-worshippers of Travancore declare that the evil power approaches them in the form of a dog,—as Mephistopheles approached Faust. The lion, the tiger, the bear, the serpent are all in the calendar of demons. Every one is familiar with the part played by the cat in demon-lore. This was the favorite form assumed by the devil in all his transactions with witches. (The connection between the cat and the infernal world will not seem arbitrary or impossible to those who have been roused in the "dead waste and middle of the night," by a serenade from the garden fence.) It was a belief of Christian ages that those who died without priestly forgiveness, and unbaptized infants, revisited their former homes in the shape of rats. Then,

too, whatever hindered man's moral progress, his temptations, his evil desires, his base thoughts,—all these proceeded from spirits of darkness.

There is still another factor in demonology, dreams. These are intimately associated with the lower forms of religion. The dream is to the savage a revelation from the world of spirits. The events that flit through his brain have the same reality as do those of his waking hours. He believes that he quits the body and walks among the beings of another world. When his dreams are evil and disturbed, he is in a hostile region carried thither by spirits of harm, against his will. In a volume of the United States exploring expedition, this passage occurs: "Sometimes when the Australians are asleep, Koin makes his appearance, siezes one of them and carries him off. The person siezed in vain endeavors to cry out, being almost strangled. At daylight, however, he disappears, and the man finds himself conveyed to his own fireside in safety. From this it would appear that the demon is here a sort of personification of nightmare—a visitation to which the natives from their habits of gorging themselves to the utmost when they obtain a supply of food, must be very subject."

These are the sources of that belief in evil spirits which had been so widespread. I said a moment ago, that in the earlier Hebrew history

and theology there are some traces of belief in minor spirits of darkness supposed to dwell in rocks and waste places and thick gloom; and that this belief probably grew up among the Hebrews, as it did elsewhere, out of the evils natural and moral with which they had to contend. We have here the germs of that mighty and countless host of wicked spirits that afterwards peopled the air of Palestine. But as yet we have not reached the arch-fiend himself. We have not come to the prince of darkness, the captain of the hosts of iniquity that war against men.

It is during the latter part of the Jewish captivity that the belief in evil spirits receives a mighty impulse, and that the supreme and controlling devil is born.

How is this to be explained? By the Persian influence upon the Jews, after Babylon had been taken by the disciples of Zoroaster. This great prophet of Persia was a man of mighty powers. He believed in one God and explained the mystery of evil as the work of demons ruled by an arch-fiend, who at length came to be known as Ahriman. Zoroaster himself believed in the ultimate triumph of good. In course of time, his followers seeing that the powers of good and evil seemed equal, neither being able to conquer, Ahriman was beld to be as supreme over evil as Ormuzd over good. The universe was a battle-

field where these two waged unceasing war, each having hosts of angels who served him. Gradually, under this influence, the idea that God should be all good and some other being all evil, the Jewish Satan came into evistence. At first, as in the book of Job, he is simply a somewhat wild and rakish member of the divine family, one of the sons of God who has been wandering up and down the earth, and has arrived at the conclusion that men are no better than they should be, and he suggests that if the Almighty thinks Job a perfect man, it might be well to put him to the test. Take away his property for example, and if that does not make him curse God, put a few boils on him and see! Then in the book of Zechariah Satan has got on so far that he stands up as an accuser of the innocent. Finally, in the first book of Chronicles, he is mentioned as suggesting the evil in certain transactions, which evil in the earlier books is attributed to God. "While it may be almost certainly assumed," says Principal Tulloch, "that with all the jealous monotheism of the Jews, there was an undergrowth of darker conceptions pointing to evil existences opposed to the divine, and that to some extent the later idea of the devil sprang out of this natural growth in the Hebrew mind of an evil side to nature and life; yet this process of growth may have been greatly aided by contact with Persian dualism;

and especially the idea of a kingdom and hierarchy of evil powers seems to have been indebted to this source." This is the origin of the devil and his angels.

From the time of the captivity down to New Testament times, the Satanic idea grew and the kingdom of darkness multiplied. Demons at length came to be so numerous that every man was supposed to have ten thousand on his right hand and one thousand on his left. He was to address no one at night, lest he address a demon. When he happened to gape he must quickly place his hand over his mouth for fear a devil might leap down his throat. It was the delight of these demons to work all possible calamities on men and even on beasts, and hence the sickness and calamities that happened to living creatures were ascribed to them. Palsy, deafness, blindness, lameness, were the work of these malicious imps. They took possession of human bodies and wrought their will. Even headaches had a special demon who caused them. (If this be true, it furnishes a plausible explanation for a very extraordinary phenomenon. The natural antagonism that demons might be supposed to feel towards the "means of grace," will easily explain why headaches are most frequent on Sunday!)

The legend by which the rabbins sought to explain demoniacal possession was as follows:

"These beings were the last of the six days' creation, but they were made so late in the day, that there was no daylight by which to fashion bodies for them. The Creator was just putting them off with a promise that he would make them bodies the next day, when lo! the Sabbath, which was for a long time personified, came and sat before him to represent the many evils which might result from the precedent he would set by working even a little on the day whose sanctity had already been promulgated. Under these circumstances, the Creator told the devils that they might disperse and try to get bodies as they could find them." On this account they took to nestling in the hearts of human beings, availing themselves of human senses and passions. They felt that they had been badly treated, and determined to be revenged.

It was in this atmosphere surcharged with devils that Jesus began his work. The belief was thoroughly ingrained into the thought and life and literature of the people. The vehicles of his own thought and teaching were thus prepared. The conceptions of sin and evil of the time in which he lived were the ones with which he must deal; the molds of expression furnished must embody his instructions. The records which have come down to us bear the impress of the age in which they were written. Demoniacs, as they were then

called, but as we should say to-day lunatics, in every stage of lunacy, abounded. We are told that many of these he healed, and we may well believe that he did so. His superiority, his gentleness, his firmness, would restore the unbalanced minds and expel the creatures of imagination who rioted in perturbed brains.

Whatever may have been the relation of his views to that kingdom of darkness which had been imported from Persia, this at all events, he did: he proclaimed great truths which when fully reeognized and accepted, must drive the belief in supernatural powers of evil forever from the human mind. Out of the heart—from the man himself—not from invisible spaces around about, populous with fiends, proceed evil thoughts and evil deeds. James, the brother of Jesus, after him declared that every man is tempted when drawn away of his own lusts, or desire, and enticed. No one but man himself is responsible for his sins. No one can harm man save himself. The universe is not against him. It is for him. Let him put himself into harmony with its laws, and he will find that all things about him are ministering angels, and not demons of destruction.

But it was during the centuries that followed Christ and his apostles, that the belief in a devil and fiends of darkness ran riot in the earth. Church history terms with accounts of personal

conflicts with the prince of evil. The footsteps of the saints were dogged by demons. The air was full. Every evil thought was suggested by them. To escape them men left the city and went into the wilderness, only to find the waste places grinning with persecuting imps. The devil, immeasurably more than Christ, dominated fifteen centuries of Christian history. Theories of the atonement were all founded upon the Satan-idea. The fathers found the problem of the great sacrifice unriddled in that it was intended literally to strike from humanity the satanic grasp. The souls of men had been taken captive in the fall, by the great adversary, and the only way in which they could be redeemed, was for "Jesus to offer himself to the devil as the ransom for which he should release all the others."

If the Satan-idea had stopped here, it would have been bad enough. But it went further. It blossomed into the bloodiest crimes that stain the pages of modern history—crimes committed in the name of Christ. The craze of witchcraft with its persecutions and murders came of it. It put the human bloodhound upon the track of the deformed and unfortunate. It crowded the courts. It lighted the faggots.

Says Mr. Leckey, in his *History of Rationalism*: "In order that men should believe in witches, their intellects must have been familiarized with

conceptions of satanic power and satanic presence, and they must regard these things with an unfaltering belief. In order that witchcraft should be prominent, the imaginations of men must have been so forcibly directed to these articles of belief, as to tinge and govern the habitual current of their thoughts and to produce a strong disposition to see Satanic agency around them." * * * "For more than 1500 years, it was universally believed that the Bible established in the clearest manner, the reality of the crime, and that an amount of evidence so varied and so ample as to preclude the very possibility of doubt, attested its continuance and prevalence. The clergy denounced it with all the emphasis of authority; the legislators of almost every land enacted laws for its punishment Acute judges, whose lives were spent in sifting evidence, investigated the question on countless occasions and condemned the accused. Tens of thousands of witches perished by the most agonizing and protracted torments, without exciting the faintest compassion."

The history of the results of this belief in the devil and his angels would be enought to condemn it in every serious mind. A doctrine that has wrought such ravages has no title to respect. Born in savagery, it has perpetutated savage feelings wherever it has been received. It does not

work for righteousness. It blights and hardens. When we are invited to-day to revive the waning belief in the devil and rehabitiate him in his medieval rags as a scarecrow to frighten sinners in times of religious excitement, we say, Let him be finally buried to rot in his sepulcher of infamy and let every stone of execration that the ages have justified be piled upon him.

The rationalistic spirit of the 18th century checked the delusion, and brought back men to the solid ground of common sense. To us to-day, those who would have been thought in other ages possessed of devils, are regarded as insane and placed in hospitals. The sterner operations of nature are no longer the work of demons: "everything is now, in the belief of the most thoughtful men, governed by law. Disease and lunacy are traced to their origin; the storm and earthquake are following some law; our suffering, when we do wrong is the consciousness that we have transgressed some principle of righteousness." We do not burn the aged and deformed and unfortunate as witches and wizards. We care for them. Thus the kingdom of darkness is yelding. Let the demons and their arch-fiend die! It is only when we banish forever these horrible notions that we can fully believe in God and in the coming of that day when "God shall be all and in all."



CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER, MINNEAPOLIS.

II.

JOSEPH COOK'S THEORY OF PROBATION.

[Sunday Evening, Oct. 19th, 1890.]

I hold in my hand a lecture by Joseph Cook, interspersed with marks of "applause" and "laughter." In that lecture Mr. Cook proved to the satisfaction of a large congregation in the city of Boston, that under the government of a just and loving and all-powerful God, sin and suffering would exist forever; that multitudes of our fellow-beings would continue in rebellion and torment endless; that even were God so disposed, he could do nothing to help them. Their condition must remain immitigable and rayless. In that congregation there were undoubtedly many whose dearest friends or relatives had passed to the other world with what Mr. Cook would call "permanent evil character;" and who consequently will sin and suffer through interminable ages. And yet that congregation greeted those statements with applause!

That was a marvellous spectacle,—that clapping and stamping audience, — a marvellous spectacle for modern civilization! It is one of those things that make us doubt sometimes the superior humanity of our generation. It is true, we have our societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals; but in the latter part of the nineteenth

century, hundreds of professedly Christian people in Boston shout over the prospect of myriads of human beings writhing in torment without remedy and without hope! Let Christian America no longer censure Pagan Rome. The assembly that clap their hands over the hell of Mr. Joseph Cook have forfeited their right to condemn the Roman populace who witnessed with pleasure gladiators hew each other to pieces in the amphitheater! Indeed, the Pagan has the advantage. The sufferings over which he gloated were but momentary. Those over which the Christian rejoices outlast the sun, endure while the throne of the Eternal stands. And still we send out missionaries to convert heathen tribes from their barbarities! Let us trust that the news of this demonstration may never penetrate to the jungles of those savage objects of missionary solicitude.

Last Sunday evening, Mr. Cook repeated some portions of that lecture in this city and was greeted with enthusiasm. The newspaper reports say: "The speaker here arrayed a host of Biblical quotations to prove his case. The Good Book taught from cover to cover that final permanence of character was reached in this world, and all life and nature corroborated it. Reason, conscience and common sense all taught it, and he could have little respect for the intellect of the man who held otherwise."

Nevertheless we venture to hold otherwise!

"It is not the best way," says Mr. Cook, "to teach the truth of future punishment, to say that a man is punished forever and ever for the sins of that hand's-breadth of duration we call time. If the soul does not repent of these with contrition, and not merely with attrition, the nature of things forbids its peace. But the Biblical and natural truth is, that prolonged dissimilarity of feeling with God may end in eternal sin. If there is eternal sin, there will be eternal punishment. Final permanence of character under the laws of judicial blindness, and the self-propagating power of sin, is the truth emphasized by both God's word and his works."

This, then, is the gist of that phase of the doctrine of which Mr. Cook is high priest: that character tends to permanence, good or evil; that it becomes so fixed and unchangeable in this world, that after death it cannot be affected in one way or another. The good cannot be modified by evil; the evil character cannot be modified by good, however strong and persistent its appeals. The statue of Memnon, in the classic fable, when touched by the rising sun, gave forth sweet music. But harder than the black marble of that ancient statue, is the heart that the sins of a few brief earthly years have petrified. The light even from Him who is said to be our sun, as

well as our shield, can evoke from that flinty substance no heavenly melody! So teaches Mr. Cook. Immutable and unyielding sin is accompanied by perpetual suffering.

This is the doctrine. What shall we say of it? Let us not say that "we can have little respect for the intellect of those who hold it;" because the fact is there are some elements of truth in this theory; there is truth enough in it to mislead even a great intellect into the belief that it is the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

The *truths* in that doctrine, however, are preached from *this* pulpit. We have never faltered,—

In laying emphasis upon *the value of the present.* "It is with a chill in my inmost spiritual self," said Mr. Cook last Sunday night, "that I hear of a doctrine being preached which encourages men in the delay of repentance." When has any such encouragement ever been held out from this pulpit? When have we ever flung to the breeze a banner inscribed with the legend "Indifference"? When have we ever taught that it mattered not how we treated our privileges or improved our opportunities? Every sin robs us of some comfort, impairs our usefulness, prolongs our misery, postpones our bliss. "To-day," and not "to-morrow," is our watchword.

This pulpit has never failed to make prominent

the power of habit. Who does not know from observation the might of sin? Who has not, in his own experience, felt the chains himself? With what anguish and struggle are the fetters of evil habit finally broken!

This pulpit has never faltered in teaching the *sinfulness of sin and the certainty of penalty,*— a penalty that cannot be evaded by any form of vicarious sacrifice.

Mr. Cook complained of a "chill in his spiritual being," when he heard of a doctrine that "encourages men in the delay of repentance." Where may he hear such doctrine? Not in this church. I will tell him. He will hear by the death-bed of every hardened sinner to whom an evangelical clergyman is called, a doctrine that encourages every other hardened sinner to wait till he lies upon his own death-bed. He will hear upon every gallows a doctrine that will encourage other criminals to wait till they stand beneath the fatal noose. He preaches such a doctrine himself in the prelude to his published lecture on the permanence of character,— a doctrine which practically nullifies the lecture that follows: "Look on the cross and you will lose the desire to sin. * * * This is a direction which a man cannot die following, and die without deliverance from the love of sin and *the fear of its penalties.*" The doctrine that there is some other being in this

universe who has done your work, obeyed the law of God in your stead, suffered the endless penalty that should have fallen upon you,— a being in whom you may say at the very last moment "I believe,"— this is a doctrine which, in causing men to delay repentance, may well "strike a chill to Mr. Cook's inner spiritual self."

The truths in that doctrine of final permanence, are not new or startling to those who are accustomed to worship in this house. But these principles do not comprise the whole truth — they are not the complete gospel. We add what Mr. Cook leaves out.

If in our contemplation of man and our outlook upon the universe, we saw nothing but the power of habit and the tendency of sin,— if we saw nothing but the fetters which bind, the evils that blight, the iniquities that harden,— if we saw nothing but the broad road down which multitudes madly plunge,— if along this dark way we saw no rising light, no redemptive agencies, no counteracting forces,— then we might believe that sin once started would, by the power of habit, go on, until it hurled us helpless and changeless at last into the abyss.

But right here is the fatal defect in this theory. It starts this tendency, and takes no account of anything else in the man himself or in his conditions. It isolates him. It makes nothing of

forces that work in the opposite direction. It leaves out many things that must enter into the account. If you take a ball and give it an impulse, it will roll continuously along the way in which it is started, if you can roll it in a vacuum; but you must know that when your ball begins rolling, the invisible hands of gravitation grasp it, the powers of the air oppose it, the friction of the earth retards, until at last the original impulse which set it in motion dies out.

If you can start the soul in sin, and leave it in a moral vacuum, or surround it with nothing but sin, and place it in a universe where only sin can operate upon it, you may make it permanent in iniquity. But this is precisely what cannot be done. The real question that confronts us is this: *What will be the outcome of the soul with this tendency to sin, in its actual environment?* The answer to this question that affirms permanence of evil, leaves out most essential considerations.

I. IT OMITS THE FACTS OF HUMAN LIFE.

When it makes death the limit beyond which character cannot be formed, it makes a limit that is purely arbitrary ; that is not warranted by the facts of life, so far as we can observe them and judge from them.

What are the facts ? so far as we can observe, character is a thing of gradual formation. We

know of no such thing in this world as a man becoming in an instant righteous or wicked. Perfection is not reached by a sudden leap; nor hopeless wickedness by a sudden fall. To say that all this is accomplished at the moment of death, is to affirm something out of harmony with all that goes before it. It is to exalt an incident into a revolution.

Those who hold this theory exhort men to repent, so long as a single thread is uncut by the fatal shears. If there is hope one minute before death, why not one minute after? What makes the mighty difference?

Again, stand by the death-beds of the worst and best men that you have ever known. The best man is imperfect; the worst has some lingering trace of good,—at least some possibility of good. Does death remove all the imperfections of the one, and blot out all the possibilities of the other?

Again, consider how many of our race die before character has had an opportunity to develop. They have reached years of responsibility, it is true; but who can say in the case of your boy or girl of ten or fifteen or even twenty, that the character has already acquired an unchanging bent for good or evil? But this theory obliges you to say when death comes to the unformed youth, "There is no change beyond!" If that crude, raw, unfinished child has not, to use the

somewhat ponderous language of Mr. Cook, "surrendered himself completely, affectionately, irreversibly to God," his character is fixed for eternity in sin, he will always be a rebel against God, and will always suffer the penalty of a traitor. I affirm that neither scripture nor reason supports such a preposterous notion. Mr. Cook diverts attention from these cases, by choosing as his examples, such characters as Caligula, Nero, Charles IX, and Milton's Satan ; but if death is the limit, he must not ignore the ones I have mentioned. A theory that deals with extreme cases alone must not be generalized into a doctrine for all.

Nor will I, upon the other hand, ignore the extreme examples he has mentioned. Let us take an instance belonging to this class,— an instance that is furnished by Mr. Crowe. "The case of two men, brothers, twins who have grown up in crime, who have been steeped in vice, until there is not an evil thing they have left undone ; year by year their names have been the synonym of whatsoever is bad. While they were still young, they seemed altogether possessed of the devil, but they sank still lower through years of debauchery, till in middle life one of them was killed in a drunken brawl. 'Surely,' you say, 'he had sinned to the uttermost, his evil heart had reached the stage of permanence.' But his brother, in all wickedness his twin, lived on the

same evil way, growing daily worse, if possible, for ten years more ; then, God knows how, there came a change, and the seemingly dead heart awoke to life. The horrible sinner of sixty years faced about, began to live righteously, became a minister, and for twenty years more preached and lived the gospel of Jesus. *His* character was not fixed when his brother died ; and his brother's character, like his, was not fixed. The death line is not the limit." Such conversions are common. Saul, when stricken down on his way to Damascus, was older in years and in sin than Nero. Who will say that when Saul, the blood-stained persecutor of the Church, could be changed into an apostle, Nero himself was beyond hope ?

II. THIS THEORY IGNORES THE HUMAN WILL ITSELF.

Mr. Cook appreciates the difficulty and tries to meet it. He says, "that self-propagating power of sin, may produce a state of soul in which evil is chosen as good, and in which it is forever too late to mend, and yet not destroy free will." The illustration he uses is Milton's Satan. "Is John Milton putting together a self-contradiction, when he pictures Satan as making his evil good and as yet retaining a free will ? I affirm that you know John Milton's Satan is not an impossible character." Milton's Satan is possible only

in the realm of the imagination. His counterpart is not to be found in actual life. A being in whom there is evil and only evil, unmixed evil, unadulterated malignity, evil unredeemed by a touch of good, never did exist in the history of the world, and does not exist to-day. And only of such a man could we say that he would always choose evil. Mr. Cook starts with a speculation and proves it by a fiction. A puff of air is his hypothesis, and clouds are his arguments. He starts with a figment of the metaphysical imagination and demonstrates it by a figment of the poetical imagination. The man in the parable who built his house upon sand, had a firmer foundation.

Let us look into this matter a little further.

You say the soul will always continue to sin. What is necessary to a sinful choice? Two courses, one right, the other wrong, must be presented; the being to whom they are presented must see that one is right and the other wrong, and *have the power* to choose between them. Without these conditions, the human being is a machine, without responsibility and incapable of sin. If two ways are open, and the will remains free, how can you say with confidence that the evil will inevitably be chosen?

Freedom of the will is often surprisingly illustrated in this world, in cases where to all appear-

Because it is in harmony with all the great forces in the universe. Why does not bad character tend to permanence? Because everything is opposed to it.

Dr. S. Crane in a remarkable article upon this subject, has made the following supposition:

"Now, put a human soul into this universe and start him in the direction of evil, and what possibility, not to say probability, is there of that soul continuing on in that direction forever? His sin has thrown him out of harmony with everything around him. Everything works against him. All the great forces of creation beat upon him. All the righteous laws of the universe smite him with their penalties. The nature of things is armed at every point for his defeat. The whole universe, with God behind it, is set in the most determined opposition to him. How absurd, then, to hold that *that* soul, that poor human soul, can hold out to all eternity in opposition to that universe; that he can stand up forever and defy all the powers of creation working under the eye of God for his subjection. The doctrine which teaches this, is not only atheistic, but it turns the universe into a farce. Created to be the great promoter of righteousness, and armed with the powers of the Infinite to this end, it utterly fails to bring this rebellious soul into obedience. He who would mock the Al-

mighty and burlesque his universe, cannot do it more effectually than by teaching such a doctrine as this.

That the absurdity of this position may be seen more effectually, let the factors of this problem, the characters in this picture, change places. Suppose all its great laws and forces tended to produce iniquity. Suppose all its powers and the whole drift of its movement were in the direction of unrighteousness. Suppose it was conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity, and is now governed and ordered unto wickedness by the devil himself.

Into this universe put a human soul started in the way of righteousness. Would any one believe that it could continue on in that way forever? Would not every one regard it as the greatest absurdity to teach that this soul with no hand to help, and nothing but his own finite will with which to resist, could hold out to all eternity against all the malignant forces of this malignant universe, directed and impelled by the very spirit of evil, and all working to compass his ruin? In such a universe could any man believe for a moment that a righteous tendency — admitting that such a tendency could exist — would be allowed to go on until it became permanent?

Why, then, believe that a tendency in sin can be permanent in this universe, a universe of

righteousness in which human souls are placed? Why believe that a sinful soul can hold out forever against God and his universe, and yet refuse to believe that a righteous soul could hold out forever against the devil and his universe?"

It is the teaching of history and experience that evil must die. Only that which is good lives and flourishes. Moral force alone persists.

> "This is he, who, felled by foes,
> Sprung harmless up, refreshed by blows;
> He to captivity was sold,
> But him no prison-bars would hold:
> Though they sealed him in a rock,
> Mountain chains he can unlock;
> Thrown to lions for their meat,
> The crouching lions kissed his feet;
> Bound to the stake, no flames appalled,
> But arched o'er him an honoring vault.
> This is he men mis-call Fate,
> *Threading dark ways, arriving late,*
> *But ever coming in time to crown*
> *The truth, and hurl wrong-doers down.*"

The great law of the universe, therefore, as we read it, is not that character, good and bad, equally tend to permanence, but that goodness tends to permanence; and that evil in the long run must perish.

This is the verdict of all profound philosophy.

Thus Emerson says: "Evil, according to the old philosophers, is good in the making. That pure malignity can exist is the extreme propo-

sition of unbelief. It is not to be entertained by a rational agent, it is atheism, it is the last profanation. The divine effort is never relaxed, the carrion in the sun will convert itself to grass and flowers." Carlyle, too, expresses this law of the universe: "The best philosophy teaches that the very consequences (not to speak of the penalties at all) of evil actions die away and become abolished long before eternity ends, that it is only the consequences of good actions that are eternal, for these are in harmony with the laws of this universe and add themselves to it, and co-operate with it forever; while all that is not in harmony with it must necessarily be without continuance, and fall dead, as perhaps you have heard in the sound of a Scottish psalm amid the mountains; the true notes alone support one another, all following the one true rule. The false notes, each following its different false rule, quickly destroy one another, and the psalm which was discordant enough near at hand, is perfect melody when heard from afar."

IV. FINALLY, THIS THEORY LEAVES OUT GOD.

It fails to base itself upon any adequate view of the Divine government.

One of several suppositions is possible. Permanence in evil may be affirmed. If God was not able to foresee the outcome, and has grown

discouraged, leaving things to run on as they will to whatsoever destiny they may chance to find. If he is not able to influence his children; if he has made souls which he cannot handle. If he has formed natures whose secret springs of action he does not understand. If he is *not* good but fiendish and delights in sin and suffering. Upon any of these grounds, permanence in evil may be maintained.

The permanence of evil either in the individual or the universe may not be affirmed, if we admit that God is wise, able and willing to save — not by compulsion, but as he always saves, by the force of moral influence. Penalty there will be — justice, but not brutality or cruelty. "Our God is a consuming fire;" but he burns the dross and refines the gold. Mr. Cook admits, in closing his lecture, that the number of the saved may be greater than the number of the lost,— may bear to the lost the same proportion that the law-abiding community bears to the convicts in prisons. But what is a prison after all, but a testimony to the imperfection of human government? It is a part of the rude machinery — the best we yet know — of holding in check certain vicious elements of society. But even human governments as they advance in wisdom, turn their prisons, so far as possible, into schools of education, discipline, and reformation, believing

that society is protected and justice satisfied, in transforming these outlaws into useful citizens. In this increasing spirit of humanity have we not a divine revelation that gives us glimpses at least of heaven's procedure? May we not believe that, in the perfect government of God, the prison house of souls, will itself be an agency of redemption? Will the divine scepter have complete sway until the convicts in perdition's cells be turned into loyal citizens of heaven?

"But," you ask, "will Nero and Paul then both be saved?" That question does not trouble Paul as much as it does Mr. Cook. Who would rejoice more than Paul if sometime in the sweep of ages, his ancient enemy should come purified and penitent, up to the foot of the throne? Would Paul who gave his life to save just such characters, step forward to cast him down? What revenge does any noble soul desire, but that his most venemous foe should turn from his sin and live? Paul himself had wrought much evil, had brought many a Christian to prison and to death. You might ask whether Paul ought to share the heaven of the saints he had murdered. Ought the murderer and his victims, in this case, both to be saved? On one occasion, Paul held the garments of the ruffians who beat out Stephen's life, and urged them to their bloody work. Upon the face of the dying Stephen streamed a light from

heaven that made his face like the face of an angel. But I think that even a brighter radiance than this beamed from the face of Stephen when, years after, the golden gates flew open, and the spirit of his ancient foe entered the kingdom! In the agony of the cross Jesus prayed for his murderers. Did he believe that his prayer would be answered? Did he want it answered? If so, the day will yet come when the pierced hands of the Great Martyr will clasp in forgiveness the hands that nailed him to the tree. But those hands will be no longer polluted with blood, those hearts will be no longer filled with hatred. In the consuming fires of God's unending and tireless love, the stains and the evil will have been purged away forever!

III.

ENDLESS PUNISHMENT FROM THE STAND-POINT OF REASON.

[Sunday evening, October 26th, 1890.]

"*And why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right.*"—LUKE 12: 57.

It is related that "when they dug for the dry dock, in the navy yard at New York, they struck a central spring, and the engineer said they had better have some cement put on it to stop it up. They opened a hole and put in some cement, but the next morning the cement was gone and the spring was bubbling up again. Then the engineer said there had better be some solid masonry to shut down the spring; so they built it in carefully with masonry. The spring waited until they got home and then burst out again. Then they determined to drive piles down and fix it. They did drive piles, and fixed it, but the spring bubbled up again just as if it did not care anything about engineers or engineering. After they had spent some months in trying to stop the spring, they built a curb around it and let it run. Afterwards they found that it had most of the east end of Long Island pushing it out, and no piles, nor masonry, nor cement could match the

secret underground force by which it was impelled."

Like that protest of the spring against the engineers has been the protest of humanity against the darker elements of theology,— especially against that darkest of all those dark elements, endless suffering in the world to come. Theologians, like spiritual engineers, have tried to stop this protest. They have plastered it over with their feeble explanations and apologies. They have built around it the masonry of their logic. They have driven into it the piles of their scriptural texts, but in vain. The entire strength of the human intellect and human heart has been behind this protest, and the devices of creed-makers have been powerless to check it!

The doctrine in question has been variously stated, and, even to-day, in details, there is extensive variation among those who hold it. Some consider one thing as essential to a complete statement; others do not. I do not wish to do anyone injustice. In all discussions of this kind, we should use the utmost fairness. Surely, it is in this spirit that I say the following proposition is one in which those who hold the doctrine will agree: THERE WILL BE IN THIS UNIVERSE, SUFFERING WITHOUT END, INFLICTED BY GOD EITHER DIRECTLY OR THROUGH THE OPERATION OF HIS LAWS, IN CONSEQUENCE OF SIN.

When they descend into particulars, th .y differ. Those who hold to the theory of a bodily resurrection, might say that some of that suffering will be physical: others would say that it will be purely mental. Some say that the penalty is inflicted on account of sins committed in this world; others that the habit of sin is unchangeably acquired in this world, and leads to perpetual sin in that which is to come,—hence, the perpetual penalty. This was the phase of the subject that we considered last Sunday evening.

One thing you will observe: that in either case, THIS LIFE IS ABSOLUTELY DECISIVE. It fixes the status of the soul forever. It determines whether the existence that lies beyond the grave shall be happy; or wretched beyond all computation, through infinite ages. In the one case, the sins are committed here that bring the unending doom beyond: in the other case, the habit becomes fixed here, that leads to the unending sin. This incapacity for anything but sin, becomes a part of the penalty. In either case, there is no star of hope shining over the grave.

I have been asked why I spend my time in controverting a doctrine that is no longer believed; that is really dead. My answer is: In the first place, a great many people *do* believe it. In the second place, I am reminded of a story. Some one relates that in a thicket on a mountain-side

he once saw a man kill a rattlesnake. He beat the life out of it with a club, and then continued the pounding until it was mangled beyond recognition. When the gentleman remonstrated, the one who had done the killing said his say in seven very significant words: "*Ye cayn't kill er rattlesnake too dead!*"

I am also asked why I do not prove my doctrine from Scripture. Those who are regular attendants here, will not charge me with this omission. For the benefit of those who are not, I intend to preach next Sunday evening a sermon on the Scriptural principles that are opposed to what Morely calls the "most frightful idea that ever corroded human character."

I view the subject from a rational standpoint to-night, because: Reason is the supreme gift of God, is itself a revelation. It is that part of our nature which links us to Deity, and which enables us to pronounce upon his nature and works. It is only by using this faculty that we can interpret the Bible or any other book; and all our interpretations must proceed upon principles which reason furnishes. The Bible itself makes constant appeal to the human intelligence. "Come, now, let us reason together." The text asks "And why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?" Why do you not use your common sense in matters of religion, as well as

in anything else? No doctrine that reason repudiates can finally stand, whatever its defenses. Such considerations as these make it evident that, in the order of logic, a sermon from the rational standpoint precedes one from the Scriptural.

From this standpoint, I affirm:

I. THE THEORY WHICH MAKES THIS LIFE ABSOLUTELY DECISIVE FOR ALL WHO CMOE INTO THIS WORLD, DENIES TO MULTITUDES OF OUR RACE A FAIR TRIAL.

I am taking the theory upon its own grounds that we are now in a state of probation. Whatever may be true in individual cases, or among favored peoples, I ask where — upon your own theory — is there anything like an adequate probation for the vast majority of mankind in all ages?

It does not consider the millions of the past who lived and died without that special light which you consider alone sufficient. Have all who trod the globe for uncounted centuries before the star of Bethlehem arose, gone down to the blackness of darkness? Was the history of the world, through all those ages, but a Niagara torrent of human souls pouring unenlightened into the bottomless abyss? That is what this doctrine says.

It does not consider those nations that since the rising of the world's new light, have sat in the old shadow!

It does not take into account the different circumstances of those who are born in Christian lands. How often have I watched the snow-flakes as they fell upon the earth, coming down — some upon the roofs of houses, some in the black mud, some upon the barren branches, some upon the hard paving-stones; so, I have thought, are human beings flung into this world. They drop into the slums of our great cities, they fall upon the hardest conditions, they drop into abysses of night and ignorance. Some one who gathers up poor children from the streets of London and gives them a breath of the country in summer, relates that a small child remarked: "I didn't know people ever didn't live in a street. I never saw houses standing by themselves before." Her little imagination had never soared above the Marylebone back slums in which her whole life had been spent.

Who says that these outcasts of the world are to be plunged into deeper sin, and darker night, and intenser misery because they were trained in ignorance and crime from the very beginning?

But we are told, "O there are degrees of penalty — degrees of suffering; they will all be judged and condemned according to their light

and opportunity!" Yes; but still condemned, and condemned forever! They are all in perdition under sentences equally long; sentences that never expire. Of two men who are serving life terms in the penitentiary, one man is having severer labor; the work of the other may be comparatively light. But they are both in the penitentiary for life. Make the penalty of those who had no light or opportunity here as easy as you please, it is still a penalty that stretches through eternity. Mitigate, if you well can do so, the lot of your prisoner; that does not take him out of prison. Give him a softer cot and better fare than others have; the walls still rise grim and impassablea round him, and there they will stand while stands the throne of God!

"Well," you say, "we are willing to leave these souls in the hands of God!" No, you are not. That is precisely what you are not willing to do! Your theory insists on telling exactly what has become of them. It does not leave them in the hands of God, but in the hands of the devil. That is my objection.

A theory that insists that this life is a probation, and yet denies a fair probation to the immense majority of the human race,—is a theory that the reason rejects.

II. THE DOCTRINE NOT ONLY DENIES TO MULTITUDES A FAIR TRIAL, BUT IN ANY CASE, IT IN-

FLICTS UPON THE SINNER A PENALTY THAT IS OUT OF ALL PROPORTION TO THE OFFENCE.

If it is for the sins of this life that he suffers, I insist that a man can not perpetrate wickedness enough in three-score years and ten to require billions upon billions of ages to settle the account. The penalty of one sinner would more than equal all the suffering that has cursed this world from the beginning.

If I am told that it is not alone for the sins of this mortal life, but also for those he commits over there,— that the inveterate inclination to sin is itself a part of his penalty,— then I say that to punish sin by making additional sin a necessity, is as if a human judge should punish a thief by making it necessary for him to steal in future; should punish a murderer by making it inevitable for him to kill.

If I am told again that the sins are of the culprit's own choosing,— that here and hereafter he freely follows the evil, and that God simply lets him go his way, and does not interfere,— this is my answer. A father finds that his son is resolved upon some desperate deed. What will he do? If he has any interest in that son, he will not rest day or night until he has done all in his power to save that boy. He will not let him go his way without interference. Will God do less for his children? And if he does all in *his* power to

save, what will be the probable — nay, the *certain*, result ?

Such penalty serves no good object ? It is utterly senseless and without purpose. If it is to gratify vengeance on the part of God, then it makes him cruel ! It is hatred and not *love* that sways the scepter. If you insist upon substituting the word "justice" for the word "vengeance," you have gained nothing. You have simply exchanged terms. You have, instead of putting new wine into old bottles, put the old wine — the wine of wrath — into new bottles. The wine is the same. The hideous reality — the thing itself, is unchanged. Cruelty by any other name is still cruelty.

Mr. Beecher well said : "You may crown the devil by as many names as you please, I will not worship him. I will not worship cruelty or vengeance ; I will not worship self adulation or self-conceit ; I will not worship mere power ; but I will worship goodness that carries with it self-respect, and authority, and government, and command, and threat and execution ; I will worship goodness that, governing through long periods, and through many generations, is patient and long-suffering, and abundant in mercy and goodness, seeking man's augmentation, purification, ennobling, and immortality. That God whose name is Love ; that God, if you choose to

call him so, who is consuming fire (for what consumes like the fire of love? What is so searching, so cleansing, so stimulating, as that?) that God whose name is power — power in love; that God whose name is justice — the justice of love; that God who when all the earth has presented its aspects, its symbols, its experiences, and these have been clustered into one great, memorable name — is still the nameless God, standing in eternity and saying, 'I am what I am,'— that God by his grandeur subdues my soul. Him I love. To him I yield up my personality and to none other!"

If the object of this penalty is to keep the good from falling,— if the sight of suffering be necessary to keep them good,— of what use has their own probation been? To what purpose the discipline through which they have passed? Are their characters still so unstable and unsettled that the sight of the lash and flame is a perpetual necessity? Is heaven only safe as long as hell roars and crackles beneath it? Are some souls suffering only that others may not fall? Are they enduring their agonies for the sake of others? If this be true, the spirits in torment are *martyrs* and not *criminals*. They are more worthy of honor than the weak saints who must be propped up in glory by the sight of their torture. If this penalty is to enhance the joy of the redeemed — as

Jonathan Edwards and many others used to teach — then one would better be in hell than in a heaven of immortal selfishness. But if heaven be what we hope and believe, such penalty would make misery within the everlasting gates. Who would be willing to think of his worst foe suffering without purpose and without remedy? Is the spirit of vengeance to be cherished by the redeemed? Is hatred, the desire for retaliation, condemned by Christianity on earth, to be made immortal, crowned and honored in heaven? Who could think of his friends, of those he loves, as writhing in this helpless condition without God and without hope?

We sympathize with Robert Falconer who said one day, that if he were admitted to heaven, the very first night he sat down with the rest of them, he would rise up and say (if the Master at the head of the table did not bid him sit down): "Brothers and sisters, harken to me for one minute. We are here by grace and not by merit. It rives my heart to think of those who are down there. I call upon each one of you who has friends or neighbors down yonder, to rise up and taste nor bite nor sup, till we all go together to the foot of the throne, and pray the Lord to let us go and do as the Master did before us, and bear their griefs and carry their sorrows down in hell there, if it may be that they will repent."

We exclaim with Andrew Rykman:

"Let me find the humblest place,
In the shadow of thy grace;
If there be some weaker one,
Give me grace to help him on;
If some blinder soul there be,
Let me guide him nearer thee."

A noble sentiment comes to us from the 7th century: "Never will I seek nor receive private, individual salvation, never enter into final peace alone; but forever and everywhere, will I live and strive for the universal redemption of every creature, throughout all worlds. While one remains outcast, I will count myself as last. Until all are delivered, I will never leave the field of sin, sorrow, and struggle."

Those who stand crowned with light, will only be happy when they know that all the rest are on the way to the same heights. It is related that at the battle of Missionary Ridge, the "soldiers started up the hill, and one detachment, breaking away from the others, pushed on through the murderous, raking fire, until they reached the very top of the cliff itself, and standing within a few yards of the confederate headquarters, planted there on the mountain-top the stars and stripes; and when they were run up and seen flying on the top of the mountain, cheer after cheer arose from the men who were in the valley below, where still the hot shot and the cannon

were raking with their murderous fire; impossible to be held back by the orders that had been issued, they rushed forward until they stood by the side of the old flag, and the day was won!" Those who have won the victory and reached the top, will never be content while a single comrade struggles through the flame and smoke of the valley!

The only end for which penalty ought to be inflicted in a perfect government is, not retaliation, but reformation. Justice, in the true sense, is satisfied with the repentance and amendment of the evil-doer. Reformation, righteousness, should be the end. There may be some who ought to suffer longer and more severely than others, but not for always.

Reason rejects a penalty that is out of all proportion to the offence, and that fails to subserve a worthy purpose.

III. PENALTY, UPON THE COMMON THEORY, NOT ONLY FAILS AS I HAVE JUST DESCRIBED, BUT IT IMPUGNS THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

It robs him either of his GOODNESS or his POWER.

I would rather be a heathen, living in a land where the name of Christ has never been heard,— where his views of the Father have never been promulgated,— a heathen bowing before the hideous deities of my own brain and hands, than

to believe that the character of our Father in heaven is such as the popular creed has made it,— a God who is so unjust or indifferent as to permit sin and suffering always to exist, or so helpless that he cannot prevent it.

We are told that evil exists here and now under the same administration. What if it does ? The problem of evil here is very different from the problem of evil hereafter, and evil forever. Evil temporary, evil that serves to bring out the good, that furnishes the opportunity for discipline, that, as Emerson says, is "good in the making,"— is a very different thing from evil that is useless and endless — evil that only sears and burns and hardens and scorches and weighs down, to all eternity the hapless wretches who are forbidden to conquer it, and who would receive no divine help if they made the effort. "The wrath of man" that is made to praise God in this world, is different from the "wrath" that is made to curse him forever in the next.

It is asserted that God has the right to do with us as he chooses. We are his creatures. If he condemns us and makes us suffer forever, it is well. With all reverence, no; he has no such right. The fact that he has brought us into this world, upon the contrary, lays him under obligation to give us somewhere, a fair chance and ample opportunity, to learn his will and do it. It

binds him to seek our good and only our good. We are something more than blocks that the carver may cast into the fire after his first trial is unsuccessful: we are living material that he will fashion at last into his own glorious likeness.

But may not a Father chastise? Yes; chastise, but not torment; chastise, but not forever; chastise, but always to correct.

I am told, however, that whatever befalls the soul, God is not to blame. He *does* give time and opportunity. If we do not improve them the fault is ours. Dr. Nehemiah Adams was wont to use this illustration: "A railroad train is advertised to start at a certain hour. If we are there a minute too late, we lose our opportunity of going upon an important journey. We think this reasonable. Why, then should we think it unreasonable for God to make us lose our chance for eternity, if we do not take the opportunity during life?"

This is my answer: I am going from here to Chicago. I miss my train. Very good; that is my lookout. I am the loser, and it is my fault. Now, carry out Dr. Adams' parallel. Because I have missed my train once, the company resolves never to sell me another ticket, never to give me another opportunity of riding upon their lines, and so far as lies in their power, decree that I never shall have another chance of getting to Chicago!

I say any railroad management that would pursue such a policy, would be idiotic to the last degree, and base beyond all power of expression! And yet it is this hypothetical piece of miserable human stupidity and meanness that Dr. Adams chooses whereby to "vindicate the ways of God to men." He would have to go far before he could find a more imbecile illustration!

This theory robs God, not only of his goodness, but also of his power. It says that he will always have a rival in his own universe. There will always be rebellion. If so, who can tell whether his throne will be secure or not?

In view of the considerations given, in the name of reason, I deny this terrible doctrine. I deny it in the name of human nature,— in the name of those unfortunates it has sent to the mad-house, in the name of the homes it has hung with midnight, the hopes it has blasted, the hearts it has torn; in the name of humanity among whose best affections it has scattered the fire of cruelty and hatred, turning the hand of man against his brother, lighting the fires of persecution, unsheathing the sword of the fanatic, erecting the gibbet and building the inquisition; in the name of God himself, I deny this outrage of the ages, this nightmare of the centuries, this madness of theology, this insanity of the creeds, this blot upon the history of human thought, this stain upon

the Divine government, this insult to Jehovah! In the name of all that is pure and lovely and of good report, I deny the hideous theory which turns the Universal Father into an Almighty fiend, which turns a God of love into a God of hatred, which makes the beneficent ruler of the world, a vengeful and malignant being, worse — infinitely worse — than all the Atillas, and Torquemadas, and kings of Dahomey, and Thugs of India, and Assassins of Arabia, and French Revolutionary tribunals, and American slave-hunters, with their blood-hounds thrown in — worse than these most cruel and devilish examples of earthly cruelty and devilishness ROLLED INTO ONE!

On the other hand, I affirm that the only reasonable outcome to those who believe in immortality at all, is the triumph of good over evil in every soul and throughout the universe. I affirm that the spirit of love which is manifested in all human relationships, that is especially manifested in such souls as Xavier, Paul and Jesus, will search every wilderness on every planet, will scour perdition itself, to find the last lost sheep!

I believe that the cry of the Lost Soul, in Whittier's poem, will sooner or later be the humble and honest prayer of every one who has wandered from God and righteousness:

> "'Father of all,' he urges his strong plea,
> "'Thou lovest all: thy erring child may be
> Lost to himself, but never lost to thee!

"'All souls are thine; the wings of morning bear
None from that presence which is everywhere;
Nor hell itself can hide; for Thou art there.

"'Through sins of sense, perversities of will,
Through doubt and pain, through guilt and shame and ill,
Thy pitying eye is on thy creature still.

"'Wilt thou not make, Eternal source and goal,
In thy long years, life's broken circle whole?
And change to praise the cry of a lost soul?'"

AND ONLY WHEN THE CRY OF THAT SOUL IS CHANGED TO PRAISE, WILL THE UNIVERSE RING WITH THE FINAL SHOUT OF VICTORY.

IV.

ENDLESS PUNISHMENT FROM THE STANDPOINT OF SCRIPTURE.

[Sunday evening, November 2nd, 1890.]

"*All souls are mine.*"—EZEKIEL 18 : 4.

Standing beneath the venerable arches of England's most notable cathedral, Westminster Abbey, the present arch-deacon Farrar, some years ago, uttered these remarkable words: "I ask you, my brethren, very solemnly, where would be the popular teaching about hell, if we calmly and deliberately erased from our English Bibles the three words 'damnation' and 'hell' and 'everlasting'? Yet I say unhesitatingly; I say, claiming a full right to speak with the authority of knowledge; I say with the calmest and most unflinching sense of the responsibility; I say, standing here in the sight of God and of my Savior, and, it may be, of the angels and spirits of the dead, that not one of those words ought to stand any longer in the English Bible; and that, being in our present acceptation of them, mere mistranslations, they most unquestionably will not stand in the revised version of the Bible, if the revisers have understood their duty."

The revisers only in part understood their duty; but they certainly have swept away much of the harsh phraseology which disfigures the King James version, and have replaced it by terms which better represent the spirit of the Great Book. Some of these changes we shall consider as we proceed.

In discussing the subject of endless punishment from the Scriptural standpoint, several things must be borne in mind.

I do not assume that the Bible from beginning to end is an absolutely infallible book,—that every statement is to pass unchallenged.

The Bible was not manufactured at once, perfect and complete, and let down bodily from the skies. It is a growth and not a creation. It records the history and legends of the race that God trained to give the world religion, and the development of their ideas, from the crude and even savage notions of the earliest and rudest ages, up to the sublime conceptions of the prophets and of Jesus himself. Not all parts of the Bible, therefore, are of equal value and authority; and the worth of a proof-text depends.

Then, too, the individual passage must be looked upon in its relation to the great trend of thought. The eddies by the side of the stream, that seem to turn backward sometimes, must not be permitted to take our attention from the great

river that flows resistlessly to the sea. As Mr. Barnum says, in his recent pamphlet, "I have only contempt for a fusillade of texts, or a culling out one here and there regardless of contexts; or an exegesis which makes one text which is a statement of some old fighting Hebrew's conception of his God as 'angry endlessly,' outweight fifty texts stating his better conception that 'His mercy endureth forever.'"

I do not assume that the object of the Bible is to teach systematic theology. It is not. It is the book of life. It is the noblest literature of the moral and spiritual nature.

God is in this book because he was, first of all, in the experiences that are here recorded. His life pulsated in the love, and joy, and hope, and aspiration, that are here expressed. The noblest passages of the Bible are written in the language of emotion and not in the language of precise and scientific thought. The difference between the Bible and systematic theology is the difference between a flower, in the meadow, by the brookside, where its roots drink moisture and its petals unfold in the sunlight, and the same flower after it has been plucked and dried and laid away in a book.

For this reason, I somewhat shrink from a discussion in which it may be necessary to pluck some of these flowers and subject them to botanical analysis.

But I now affirm, that notwithstanding the two statements I have just made, *i. e.* that there are some ideas of the earlier times that do not harmonize with those of the latest times; and that much of what is written is the language of strong emotion (so that in denouncing sin, one might expect emphatic and even exaggerated censure); notwithstanding all this, *I affirm that the doctrine of endless punishment is not to be found in these pages!*

It is not to be found in the records of the barbarous beginnings. The man of that day, indeed, imagined that God gave him command to despoil and even to slaughter his enemies; but the work of vengeance ended upon earth, and was not continued beyond the grave. So that the warlike Israelite of some milenniums past, was really in advance of the modern creeds that declare an eternity of torture. David invoked some terrible anathemas upon his foes; but he wanted the plagues rained upon them here, in a horrible tempest that he could see. It was present and instantaneous retribution for which he prayed; not future and endless. This spirit was far enough from the spirit of Christ and is not to be justified; but it was immeasurably better than the disposition which would add to the sin and misery of this life, the sin and misery of a world without end.

Let us now take in our hands the Revised Version of the New Testament. With the changes that the revisers have made either in the text or in the margin, it will not be necessary for any one to read Greek in order to appreciate the principles I shall lay down.

I WHEN THE WORD "ETERNAL" IS APPLIED TO THE TERMS "LIFE" AND "DEATH," IT IS NOT PRIMARILY DURATION, BUT QUALITY, THAT IS MEANT.

Eternal life is not life that stretches ceaselessly onward, but life that is worth prolongation.

"THIS is *life eternal*, to KNOW thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." *John 7 : 3.*

In what does this knowledge consist? John tells us what it is to know God: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and *knoweth* God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." *1 John 4: 7.*

What is it to know Christ? Let Peter give answer: "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful *in the knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ." *2 Pet. 1: 5-7*

This character is life eternal. The opposite of it is death. This life and death are enjoyed or suffered here. So some are spoken of as having eternal life abiding in them now; others are abiding even now in death. How long these states may continue, or whether a man may pass from one into the other, these expressions themselves do not determine. They give us QUALITY and nothing else. "We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths; in feelings, not in figures on a dial. He most lives who feels most, thinks the noblest, acts the best."

I may say right here that the Bible deals less with the future than we commonly suppose. Its aim is not to map out the soul's condition hereafter; but to regenerate and purify and build up into righteousness the soul of man on this side of the horizon. "When I talked with an ardent missionary," says Emerson, "and pointed out to him that this creed found no support in my experience, he replied, 'It is not so in your experience, but it is so in the other world.' 'Other world!' I exclaimed, 'There is no other world; God is one and omnipresent; here or nowhere is the entire fact.'" "This world is the next world," says the Indian proverb. Omar Kayam sings:

> "I sent my soul into the invisible,
> Some letter of that after life to spell;
> And by and by my soul returned to me,
> And whispered, I myself am heaven or hell."

II. WHEN THE IDEA OF DURATION IS INVOLVED IN THE WORD "ETERNAL," IT IS INDEFINITE, NEVER ENDLESS.

Right here the revision will help us. I do not think that those who did this work accomplished their full duty. Perhaps the pressure upon them was too great. But much of the scholarship that was frightened out of the text has taken refuge in the marginal notes.

Take an example: "Whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in that which is to come." *Mat. 12: 32.* In the margin we find "age" instead of "world." Turn to the parallel passage in Mark: "Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin." *Mark 3: 29.* But the adjective in Mark is formed from the noun in Matthew. If the noun means "age," the adjective means "age-long." In both cases the word is indefinite. The reduplication "this age or the next" intensifies the heinousness of the sin, but does not leave it without hope of remedy in the sweep of ages.

The duration depends upon *the nature of the thing* of which this adjective is descriptive.

The fire which burned Sodom and Gomorrah was called "eternal fire." Jude says: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them

* * are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire." *v. 7.* But in this case the fire only burned till the work of destruction was complete.

But we are asked, if the word is indefinite *what security have God, and heaven, and the righteous in the next world;* for the same term is used to describe the duration of each?

Are you afraid, because the hills are said to be "everlasting," and yet crumble, that God's throne also must crumble? The words that describe them are the same; but is there not something in the throne of God more durable than the hills? Are you afraid that because Canaan was given to the Jews for an "everlasting" possession, and yet they were driven out and scattered, that the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," the city that shall be the inheritance of his saints, is also in danger? Are you afraid, because the same indefinite term is applied to sin and righteousness, that if sin comes to an end righteousness must also cease? Is there not a persistent, indestructible, immortal quality in righteousness, that sin does not possess? Will the sunlight of heaven fade away, if the lurid flames of hell are extinguished? Does this indefinite term so link together God and Satan, life and death, rapture and torment, virtue and vice, paradise and the pit, that the former can exist

only while the latter abide? Believe it not. There is something in the very nature of each that decides the period of its "age-long" duration.

"Thank God," exclaims Farrar, "I do not rest my own hopes of seeing God's face forever hereafter on the ten times refuted attempts to read false meanings into the Greek Lexicon, in order to support a system far darker than St. Augustine's from whose mistaken literalism it took its disastrous origin."

But we need not stop here. There are other words in the New Testament, stronger words, so far as duration is concerned, *that are applied to God and goodness.* They are the words that are translated unfading, immortal, imperishable. And these words are never applied to sin and penalty. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, * * to an inheritance, *incorruptible*, undefiled, and *that fadeth not away*." *1 Pet. 1: 3-4.* "And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory *that fadeth not away*." *1 Pet. 5: 4.* "Now unto the King Eternal, *immortal*, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever." *1 Tim. 1: 17.* "And changed the glory of the *incorruptible* God into an image made like to corruptible man." *Rom. 1:*

23. "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an *incorruptible*." *1 Cor. 9: 25*. "The dead shall be raised *incorruptible*, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on *incorruption* and this mortal *immortality*. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in Victory!" *1 Cor. 15: 51-54*.

None of the terms which are here employed, and which are used to qualify God, and the state of the righteous hereafter, are ever employed to denote the duration of evil! We are, therefore, doubly assured that God shall live and that righteousness shall live, while sin must perish and suffering cease. The throne of God and the throne of iniquity do not rest on the same foundation. The bliss of the righteous and the woe of the wicked do not run parallel through endless ages.

III. LET US NOW PASS FROM THE ADJECTIVE TO THE NOUN — TO THE WORDS THAT, IN THE KING JAMES ARE ALL ALIKE TRANSLATED "HELL."

There are three; two of them of Pagan, and one of Jewish origin. Here the Revision helps by sometimes giving the correct translation, and always by placing the correct word in the margin.

The first of these words is used but once. "For if God spared not the angels when they sinned, but cast them down to *hell* and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reservcd unto the judgment." *2 Pet. 2: 4.* In this case, the margin informs us that the word translated hell is TARTARUS. And what was Tartarus? In classic mythology, the prison of the Gods, the place into which they cast their foes. Even if Peter believed the ancient fable, he declares in these very epistles that Christ himself went and preached to the spirits in prison. The fate of the captives in Tartarus could not have been so dreadful and desperate, if the light of his countenance illumined the dungeons, and the sound of his voice made melody among the gloomy rafters. If Peter believed the very worst that the pagan imagination had pictured concerning these dungeons of their deities, he embraced the reformation of those convicts in the redeeming work of him who came to seek and to save that which was lost!

The second word translated hell, is HADES. This also is introduced from pagan mythology. It signifies in general the world of departed spirits, without regard to condition. Sometimes, indeed, that condition was indicated; for Hades had a line of division running through it. It was in Hades where the rich man "lifted up his eyes,

being in torments,"— in that divison of Hades assigned to the wicked. The purpose of this parable was not to indorse the heathen Hades, but to employ it as a symbol of the great law of compensation. Suffering worth and pampered selfishness change conditions. Sin is punished and righteousness rewarded. Those who in this life granted no favors to the weak and despised, may have to ask them in the next. They shall learn what their own conduct meant. The suffering they caused others shall visit their own souls. The sword they whetted for their neighbor shall pierce their own hearts. The one shall be comforted, the other tormented. This is the gist of the parable. Christ simply retained the pagan elements, the impassable dividing gulf among them, without intending to sanction all the details; as any one to-day might use, by way of illustration, a story from the Greek or Indian mythology to enforce some important truth. The rabbis used to teach that "there is only a space of two fingers breadth between hell and heaven; the sinner has but to repent sincerely, and the gates to everlasting bliss will spring open."

There is one element, however, in the story that has never been sufficiently considered, and that does not leave us without hope, even in the case of Dives,— his concern for his brethren. The feeling of human sympathy is still strong.

He forgets his own pain to plead for those he has left behind. Let them not come to this place of torment. O father Abraham, send some one to warn them. Let Lazarus go. Spare them the agony that I am undergoing! I have never been quite satisfied with Abraham's answer. I think he might have been a little more generous,— but let that go. I do say there is hope for any one who has not lost the power of sympathy and love,— whose affection for his brothers is so great that he would spare them the agony which is upon him. Such a heart was not permanently hard. Such a nature could not have been incorrigibly wicked. If those feelings of yearning love can exist in hell,— if the souls in torment are so full of pity that they want to send missionaries to earth,— if they desire the gospel preached to those who are still in the flesh,— then I say that Hades, and the worst compartment of Hades, is to be preferred to any church on earth whose members are so obdurate and hardened and inexorable in their views of the future that they would not return the favor by allowing the gospel to be preached in hell! For such a soul as that of Dives, a soul so solicitous for those who are treading the paths of sin and selfishness, sometime in the sweep of ages, a way will be found to cross that bridgeless gulf!

The third word translated Hell is GEHENNA.

This is the word that has made most of the trouble; but this word is always placed in the margin as "Gehenna."

What was the origin of this term and how came it to be applied to the consequences of sin? A writer in the *Popular Science Monthly* for last August, says: "This latter designation means the valley of the Son of Hinnom, and was originally the name of a gorge outside of Jerusalem, in which the Jews had practiced the fiery worship of Moloch, and where afterwards offal from the city and the bodies of criminals were thrown to be consumed by the fires always kept burning there." Here burned the fire that was not quenched. Here rioted the worm that never died. Jesus took this place as a symbol of the soul filled with iniquity and blazing with the fires of remorse and retribution.

I was interested in reading, about a year ago, a letter from a missionary of the American Board, in which he says: "While in Palestine, I have watched with great interest the repeated 'bordering off of the flocks from the kids,' as day by day the former were led out to pasture, and the latter left at home. The scene at the mouth of the little caves adjoining the old potter's furnace, which gave name to Gehenna or Hell, I shall not forget. The kids are obstreporous little fellows, getting into mischief, and withal not able to stand

the journey of the day. The Arab boys and dogs had a long tug at the work of keeping back the kids who must spend the day in or at the mouth of these dismal caves. One of the caves opens into the place where the fires of hell used to be, but it is walled up sufficient to keep the kids from falling in and breaking their necks. On one occasion I saw a flock of sheep peacefully feeding on the grass growing upon the top of hell, whose fires were long ago extinct."

That from a missionary of the American Board! One would have thought the paper would have refused to publish it. It might unsettle somebody, to find that the real, genuine and original hell, was at Jerusalem; that it is now grown over with grass, and that its fires are extinct! So will the fires of which this was but the symbol become extinct. Those flames of Gehenna even while they burned were flames of purifying, consuming the filth, preserving the city.

IV. THIS LEADS ME TO SAY THAT OFTEN THE WORDS WHICH ARE USED IN SCRIPTURE TO DENOTE PUNISHMENT, CONTAIN THE IDEA OF "REFORMATION."

Let us take but a single example, that famous passage "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Prof. Taylor Lewis, an orthodox commentator, says: "These shall go away into the punish-

ment of the world to come, and those into the life of the world to come. That is all that we can etymologically or exegetically make of this passage."

But no; we can make something more. For the word which is translated "punishment" is the Greek word for "pruning." Prof. Plumptre says: "There were two words which the evangelist might have used, *kolasis*, *timoria*,—of these the first carries with it by the definition of the greatest of Greek ethical writers, the idea of a reformatory process. It is inflicted for the sake of him who suffers it. The second, on the other hand, describes a penalty purely vindictive or retributive. St. Matthew chose — if we believe that our Lord spoke Greek, *he* chose — the former word and not the latter." Dean Trench says the same.

When, therefore, the Judge in the parable pronounced his sentence, he bade the unrighteous depart to a place where their sins and errors and iniquities might be cut away, and they, like trees after pruning, develop into better and more fruitful life.

May I pause here for a moment, to say again what I have said so often, and what, I fear, must be said thousands of times more, that

(1.) No other church believes so firmly, so unequivocally in punishment for sin as does this

church! We believe that it is *personal;* that it belongs to the individual, in such a sense that no vicarious arrangement can be made for its removal. "Every man must bear his own burden." The only way to escape is to escape from sin. To this the influence of Christ may lead, not as substitute, but as example, teacher, inspiration.

(2.) That it extends, if necessary, *into the next world.*

(3.) That *it lasts as long as sin lasts.*

(4.) That its object, in the perfect government of God is *remedial* and not *retaliatory*, to remove and not to perpetuate evil.

Deal with us fairly. I do not ask any one to accept this view; I only ask that, in speaking of the utterances that go forth from this pulpit, they be not misrepresented. Time after time, I have been compelled to hear the miserable slander, "O you preach that a man may do anything he likes, and go to heaven without suffering for it!" If I ever preached such an idiotic doctrine as that may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, and my right hand forget her cunning! I fling the wretched falsehood back into the faces of the ignorant or malicious traducers who made it. "O you open the doors indiscriminately and sweep the gold with the dross into Paradise!" Never! It is not we who send the reeking murderer directly from the gallows to glory. We

insist that the dross shall be purged away, we insist upon the refiner's fire. "Our God is a consuming fire," who will burn the evil till it is removed. Not till the last sin has been forsaken, not until the last evil thought and desire have died, will the soul's happiness be complete. But after sinners have passed through the fires of repentance and purification, who then would deny them Paradise ?

The editor of the *New York Observer* recently said: "I loathe the thought of spending an eternity in the company of Judas." But if Judas shall have repented, why loathe more the thought of spending an eternity in his company than in that of Peter who denied his Lord and afterwards repented ? I look with hope even upon Judas. Great as was his crime, it was not beyond mercy. Narrow, ignorant, avaricious — he did a deed that well may rouse our indignation, even to-day. But Judas repented. He went back to the chief priests and flung at their feet the price of his treason. Smitten with remorse, he went and hanged himself. If he had gone to Christ, he would have been pardoned at that moment as freely as was Peter. That pardon he will yet receive, if it has not already been given. That was an awful scene in Gethsemane, when the black-browed traitor exclaimed "Hail Master!" and kissed him,—the foul lips smirching the face of the

Innocent One! How indignant we feel! But there is a nobler scene than that, one which thrills with grander music the higher chords of our nature. Look, Judas emerges at last, slowly, slowly, from the gehenna of remorse, the flames of conscience, and rises upward. The dark look has gone. The eye is no longer averted, but seems searching for some familiar object. Ah, there is some one coming to meet him, whose radiant face makes all around it light. It is he whom Judas betrayed. They meet, and upon the lips that once gave the traitor's kiss Jesus prints the kiss of forgiveness,—the kiss of reconciliation. But the lips of Judas are now loyal forever!

V. BUT THERE IS ONE CONSIDERATION BEYOND ALL THAT I HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED: THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

This is shown in *the terms by which he is revealed;* "Father," "Love." Whatever you give up, hold on forever to that conception of Him.

It is shown in *what he requires of us.* If he says to us, "Forgive your enemies," he will not visit his own with eternal torments.

Whittier sings:

"Believe and trust. Through stars and suns,
Through life and death, through soul and sense.
His wise, paternal purpose runs;
The darkness of his providence
Is star-lit with benign intents.

"O joy supreme! I know the voice,
Like none beside on earth or sea;
Yea, more, O soul of mine, rejoice!
By all that he requires of me,
I know what God himself must be."

With this thought of the Divine character written in their hearts, holy men of old looked forward and beheld in prophetic vision, *the glad day of final restoration!*

"Having made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ both which are in heaven and *which are on earth*, even in him." *Eph. 1: 9-10.*

To the things in heaven and things on earth that are to glorify God the Father, Paul adds (*Phil. 2: 9-10*), "*Things under* the earth" also!

The poet Moore sings:

"Well might the loves rejoice, and well did they
Who wove these fables picture in their weaving,
That blessed truth which, in a darker day,
Origen lost his saintship for believing,
That love, eternal love, whose fadeless ray,
Nor time, nor death, nor sin, can overcast,
Even to the depths of hell will find his way,
And soothe, and heal, and triumph there at last!"

Take this passage also: "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. * * And when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son himself be subject

unto Him that did put all things under him, *that God may be all and in all!*" *1 Cor. 15: 25-28.* Every one shall finally be subject unto God as Christ is subject.

This is the only rational issue of a universe that originated in love, and this is governed by love. The doctrine of endless sin and endless suffering is the doctrine of chance, or imbecility, or cruelty. It is the doctrine of a universe without a God, or a universe that is managed by an omnipotent devil! Take your choice — atheism or Satan! But if you believe in God, believe in a just and reasonable one. Lord Bacon well said: "It were better to have no opinion of God at all than such an opinion as is unworthy of him; for the one is unbelief, the other is contumely; and certainly superstition is the reproach of the Deity." Plutarch saith well to that purpose, "Surely," saith he, "I had a great deal rather men should say there were no such man at all as Plutarch than they should say, 'There was one Plutarch that would eat his children as soon as they were born,' as the poets speak of Saturn! And as the contumely is greater towards God, so is the danger greater towards men."

The doctrine of endless sin and endless suffering is a doctrine that blasphemes and slanders the Almighty. It virtually hurls him from his throne, and gives his scepter over to evil. It says that

there is one foe in his dominions which he cannot conquer, Sin! The doctrine of the final restitution of all things says that he both can and will make an end of iniquity and of its terrible consequences. It makes him supreme. It declares that there is no foe which his love cannot conquer. It declares that he shall have no rival to his throne and no rebels in his empire. No sin so black but he will wash it away; no sinner so obdurate but he shall be changed into a loyal and loving subject. No province of his kingdom so dark but it shall be flooded with the light of his countenance; no prison of spirits chained and tortured whose foundations shall not be razed, whose captives shall not be reformed and set free from the fetters of sin; no dungeon of despair that shall not be turned into a palace of hope. No voice lifted in agony and cursing and terror from the bosom of the pit but shall finally take up the anthem of praise and keep time and tune with the angels that make melody before the throne of God!

This is my trust! If I am wrong, I can only say with Whittier:

"O brothers, if my faith be vain,
If hopes like these betray,
Pray for me, that my feet may find
The safe and surer way.

"And thou, O Lord, by whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be,
Forgive me, if too close I lean
My human heart on thee!"

V.

UNIVERSAL RESTORATION THE EARLY FAITH OF THE CHURCH.

[Sunday evening, November 9, 1890.]

About three years ago while traveling from Grasmere to Keswick, in the lake region of England, the stage coach stopped for a few moments to water the horses, beside one of the tiniest churches we had ever seen. When we asked the coachman whether the little church was remarkable for anything, he replied, "No; but it's full of h'antiquity." That fact, in his mind, seemed quite enough to invest the insignificant structure with dignity and honor. It often happens in the history of human thought, that when an opinion begins to lose its position in the popular intelligence, those most interested in perpetuating it, cry out: "This is the ancient and unbroken faith of the church; why do you endeavor to remove the land-marks that our fathers have set?" The authority of antiquity is invoked to quell the insubordination of reason. Moth-eaten and mouldy volumes are exhumed from buried libraries to pile upon protesting heart-throbs. The ghosts of the dead are conjured up to frighten the living into submission.

This is the last resort of those who proclaim the doctrine I have for some Sunday evenings been controverting,—the doctrine of endless sin and suffering, the doctrine of unending and starless woe, the doctrine that man is a mistake and his Maker a fiend. This doctrine, I say, when other defences crumble, is supported by appeals to the past. Undeterred by the fact that "gray hairs cannot make folly venerable," the devotees of this supreme folly, this acme of superstition, point to its whitened locks, its tottering steps, its palsied hands, exclaiming with an accent intended to settle everything, "Prithee, look! lo, behold!" They turn to us and say, "You ought to be overwhelmed and silenced by the sight. You and your theories are but of yesterday. You are upstarts. You are mere adventurers. You have sprung up like the prophet's gourd, and will as suddenly wither."

And yet we are not overwhelmed or silenced! I do not care for this appeal to the past, excepting as it raises a question of fact that ought, in the interests of truth, to be settled. For my own part, I should never accept a doctrine merely upon its genealogy. It would have to bring something more than a duplicate of parish records. It must address itself to my best judgment and to my conscience,—to those faculties God has given me for discerning between truth and falsehood. I

am certain that this also is the feeling of most of those whom I address. The one great question evermore is this: Does your theory or creed commend itself to the enlightened intelligence and moral sentiment of to-day?

But when the arrogant assertion is made that the creed of endless punishment dates from the dawn of Christianity, that it has been universally held by the church from the beginning, that its dominion has been complete and unquestioned; and that upon the other hand, the doctrine of the final restoration of the erring and sinful, the doctrine that the last lost sheep will be found, and that the last prodigal will sometime come to himself and find his way back to his Father's house, is a modern heresy,—when all this is asserted, and asserted as it so often is, in the most insolent and braggart manner, it may be well to inquire upon what historic basis this monumental assumption rests. The appeal is made to history; to history let us go.

Inasmuch as we had the New Testament under consideration last Sunday night, we shall begin to-night upon this side the apostolic line.

I am now about to make a statement that may startle at first even those who are best prepared to receive it. It is this: Among the immediate successors of the apostolic Christians, the views which are to-day stamped as heresy by orthodoxy, were

commonly held; great leaders of the church, such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen "maintained by specific arguments that love must triumph in the ultimate recovery of every soul;" the schools of Christian learning, with one or two exceptions, were committed to the advocacy of this doctrine; this idea prevailed and dominated the thought of Christendom until the scepter of authority passed from the Eastern to the Western division of the church.

Upon the other hand, I affirm that the doctrine of endless punishment "was not generally held among Christians until the beginning of the sixth century, when the Romish hierarchy became powerful, and the Emperor Justinian, by royal anathema, placed the doctrine of universal salvation under ban."

I make these statements understanding perfectly the responsibility involved. I make them in the full confidence that they will be vindicated before the tribunal of history.

For the present, I place behind my statements the words of Archdeacon Farrar, "The more I look into the history and writings of those times, the more firmly convinced I am that Neander was right in saying that the doctrine of the final restitution, taken alone, never was regarded as heretical, or as untenable within the limits of the faith, until the furious attack upon Origen two centuries

after his death, led men to mix up this opinion,—which I still believe and maintain was never condemned by any general council—with others of his opinions which were so condemned. Such is the opinion of Neander. And in spite of the asserted unanimity of the church on the subject, I have shown (1) that the views of Origen were held by large multitudes both in the east and in the west; (2) that they were defended by church fathers of the most splendid reputation without any injury to their canonization or their character for orthodxy; (3) that they found champions in some of the deepest thinkers and ablest writers of the three greatest theological schools—the school of Alexandria, the school of Antioch, and the school of Cappadocia."—*Mercy and Judgment, p. 271.*

I also record the saying of Doderlin: "In Christian antiquity, the more eminent and learned a man was, in that proportion did he cherish and defend the hope that torments would at some time end."

Leaving these general affirmations, let us now proceed with the evidence more in detail. Let us see whether we shall be able to justify the declarations with which we started.

I. FOR A CENTURY OR MORE AFTER THE DEATH OF JESUS, NO ELABORATE ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO FORMULATE A SYSTEM OF THEOLOGY.

I said last Sunday evening that the New Testament itself did not contain a body of formal divinity. It is the book of life, the book of principles, the book of religious forces. These principles and forces were active among the first Christians before the New Testament had been compiled. The book itself was the outgrowth of the new life, the life was not the outgrowth of the book. The new religion made the new literature, not the literature the religion; just as the spirit of God was back of the universe and made it, not the outgrowth of the universe; just as the thought of man is behind his monument or temple, not the monument or temple behind the thought. Life always precedes expression. The new experiences wrought by the truths Jesus taught, and by the inspiration of his own example, were so exultant and happy that the early Christians were content with the facts, and did not seek to explain them. It was enough that they had been redeemed from the bondage of sin, reconciled to God, turned from hatred to love, and filled with the hope of immortality!

But so far as they did embody their feelings and hopes in word or symbol, we find those words and symbols on the walls of the CATACOMBS where they were wont to lay their dead. In these chambers of gloom which were made bright with signs of peace and trust, we find the ideas they most

commonly cherished, and the beginnings of Christian Art. These subterranean cells were for centuries the burial places of Christian dead. What story do they tell? What ideals do we find inscribed? Is there anything that even remotely hints the later creeds of darkness and wrath?

Let us take the authority of Dean Stanley. He says that 'when we proceed to the beliefs themselves as presented in the pictures or inscriptions, confining ourselves as much as possible to those which are earliest and most universal, they do not coincide with the theology and art of the modern Western Church, but with those of the Eastern.' The Eastern theology was shaped by Clement and Origen, as we shall see, and was the theology of hope, of joy, of final victory, while the Western theology was given its final form by Augustine and was the theology of despair and defeat, of sin and suffering permanent in the universe, and Heaven helpless or unwilling to have it otherwise. And Dean Stanley tells us that the ideas inscribed by sign or word or picture upon the catacombs, and especially the earliest of these, were in harmony with the doctrines of Clement and Origen, and not in harmony with the later doctrines of Augustine.

In two ways the breadth of thought and of sympathy which characterized those Christians

who were nearest in time to their Great Master, may be shown:—

(1.) "It is astonishing," says Dean Stanley, "how many of these decorations are taken from heathen sources and copied from heathen paintings. There is Orpheus playing on his harp to the beasts; there is Bacchus as the god of the vintage; there is Psyche, the butterfly of the soul; there is the Jordan as the god of the river. The classical and the Christian, the Hebrew and the Hellenic elements had not yet parted. The strict demarkation which the books of the period would imply between the Christian church and the heathen world had not yet been formed or was constantly effaced. The catacombs have more affinity with the chapel of Alexander Severus, which contained Orpheus side by side with Abraham and Christ, than they have with the writings of Tertullian who spoke of heathen poets only to exult in their future torments, or of Augustine who regarded this very figure of Orpheus only as a mischievous teacher to be disparaged, not as a type of the union of two forms of heathen and Christian civilization."

The early Christians were willing to concede that in the ideas and symbols of their heathen friends and neighbors, was much of truth and beauty. This they accepted, and gave in return the lessons they themselves had learned in the

school of Christ. They recognized whatever of value their neighbors had, and did not tear their hair and shriek in frenzy when they found a heathen who had common sense and common morality. They rejoiced over such discovery. They did not feel that God had defrauded them out of what he had graciously bestowed upon another. They felt that he was the God of other people as well as of themselves; that Greek and Roman, as well as Jew and Christian, were his children. Nor did these early Christians at first try to terrify their heathen fellow citizens into the fold by threats of endless torment. If this gentler policy could have been longer pursued, it would have averted many of those sharp collisions between heathen and Christian, which sent thousands of Christians to the stake and the lions. When the Christian began to threaten the Pagan with undying flames in the next world, the Pagan retorted by kindling the fires for the Christian in this world. The Pagan argued that if he had to stand it forever and ever in the next world, it was no more than fair that the Christian should stand it for a few moments in this world. I do not say that the Pagan was right, but we can at least understand his feelings.

Prof. Allen says: "When Christian apologists like Tertullian were proclaiming to their heathen brethren a day of final judgment in which they

were to receive the never-ending penalty of their madness, we may admire the boldness which their speech betrays, but we can no longer wonder at the growing indignation which was soon to culminate in the Decian persecution, in one supreme effort to root up and exterminate the Christian church." — *Continuity of Christian Thought, page 123.*

The writer of these words is professor of church history in the Episcopal Divinity School at Cambridge.

It is no wonder that the Roman people and rulers tried to uproot a system that launched such remorseless anathemas upon them,—that gave them only the alternative, "Believe as we do, or be irrevocably damned." It was not in human nature to do other than resist, and they resisted by the rude methods with which they were most familiar. It is no wonder, I say, that they tried to uproot such a system. The pity of it is that they did not succeed in uprooting, in the earliest stages of its growth, the frightful notion that made all the trouble and that was no part of Christianity, before it sprang up into the deadly Upas of after ages, in whose blighting shadow the face of Joy grew white with fear, in whose poisonous atmosphere Hope, the lovliest child of Paradise, fell dead! Pity it is that this plant, which our Heavenly Father did NOT plant, could

not have been rooted out of the garden of God — even by the iron hand of Rome!

(2.) But we must return to the Catacombs. The most characteristic, as well as the earliest, picture upon those walls is the figure of the Good Shepherd.

"It represents to us," says Dean Stanley, "an aspect of the only Christian belief that has not been common in later times, but of which we find occasional traces even in the *writings* of these earlier centuries, namely that the first object of the Christian community was not to repel, but to include; not to condemn, but save. In some of the paintings of the Good Shepherd, this aspect of the subject is emphasized by representing the creature on his shoulder to be not a lamb, but a kid; not a sheep, but a goat. It is this which provokes the indignant remonstrance of Tertullian, in the only passage of that father which contains a distinct reference to the popular representation of the Good Shepherd; and it is on this unchristian protest that Matthew Arnold founds one of his most touching poems:

"He saves the sheep—the goats he doth not save;
So spake the fierce Tertullian—
But she sighed,—
The Infant Church! of love she felt the tide
Stream on her from her Lord's yet recent grave,
And then she smiled, and in the Catacombs,
With eye suffused, but heart inspired true,
She her Good Shepherd's hasty image drew,
And on his shoulder not a lamb, but kid."

Those who felt that tide of love stream on them from their Lord's yet recent grave,—who felt it so strongly that they could picture him bearing upon his shoulders a goat or a kid as well as a lamb, could not believe, DID not believe that he ever meant to make an endless separation between the goats and the sheep!

"What, then," asks the Dean, "was the popular religion of the first Christians? It was, in one word, the religion of the Good Shepherd. The kindness, the courage, the grace, the love, the beauty of the Good Shepherd was to them, if we may so say, prayer-book and articles, creed and canons, all in one. They looked on that figure, it conveyed to them all that they wanted. As ages passed on, the Good Shepherd faded away from the mind of the Christian world, and other emblems of the Christian faith have taken its place. Instead of the gracious and gentle pastor, there came the omnipotent judge, or the crucified sufferer, or the infant in his mother's arms, or the master in his parting supper, or the figures of innumerable saints and angels, or the elaborate expositions of the various forms of theological controversy."—*Christian Institutions, p. 233.*

This was the unformulated faith of the early Christians, of those so close to the time of the Master that they could almost feel the pulsations of that mighty heart that yearned over Jerusalem,

that made him go forth to seek and to save that which was lost. These Christians were distinguished by charity for their heathen neighbors, and by a faith in their own Good Shepherd, so strong, so brave, and so comprehensive, that they dared to complete the parable he himself had spoken, by picturing him in the act of bringing back from the disciplinary punishment into which they had been driven the very goats and kids that had stood upon his left hand in the judgment!

II. BUT THE HUMAN MIND SEEKS TO REDUCE ITS FAITHS TO SYSTEM. IT WANTS, AT LAST, DEFINITE AND FORMULATED STATEMENTS. THIS NEED BEGAN TO BE DISTINCTLY FELT TOWARDS THE END OF THE SECOND CENTURY.

We have considered the popular belief as it expressed itself in symbols on the walls of the Catacombs. Let us now proceed to the schools. Let us find out who first undertook to organize the faith, and with what result. Let us inquire whether the labors of scholars harmonized with the spontaneous sentiments of the people. Did the decisions of culture support the joy and hope, the anticipations of victory final and complete over evil, that the voice of religion had whispered to the soul?

The attempt to reduce Christianity to a system was first made at Alexandria. The Church in this beautiful and famous city, the intellectual center

of the world, had founded a school "adorned with the fairest names of Christendom." Here began the work of giving to the new religion a sound, philosophic expression, that should satisfy the demands of reason as well as of faith. In the school of Alexandria was wrought out a system of theology,—not without its faults, indeed, but so just and so reasonable that back to its central principles the thought of the world, so long under bondage to the gross tenets of Augustine, is turning to-day. I have no time, nor is this the place, to describe it in detail, for I am seeking its verdict upon a single point. I am seeking to find what was held, in this first Christian school, upon the question of human destiny.

I turn to Giesler, the Church historian, and I read this general description: "The Alexandrians set the retributive justice of God in closest connection with his love and goodness. Even punishments, so they taught, are a proof of the goodness of God, designed partly to improve the sinner himself, partly to intimidate others from sin, partly to protect the injured. But Clement and Origen especially dwell upon the improvement of the sinner as the end of the Divine punishments. Clement says, as children by their teacher or father, so are we chastened by Providence. A revengeful punishment, a retaliation of evil, God knows not. Origen compares God with a physi-

cian who applies not only mild but, against confirmed diseases, also severe remedies."—*History of Doctrines.*

It was under Clement and his great pupil and successor, Origen, that the Alexandrian school reached its full development. The writings of these fathers are extant, and we may go directly to them; for what they believed, in the main, the Church believed, during this period of Christian history.

Let us read from Clement (190 A. D.—203 connection with school):

"God works all things up to what is better." * * * "If in this life there are so many ways for purification and repentance, how much more should there be after death. The purification of souls when separated from the body will be easier. We can set no limits to the agency of the Redeemer; to redeem, to rescue, to discipline, is his work, and so will he continue to operate after this life."

"How is he a Saviour and Lord, unless he is the Saviour and Lord of us all? He is certainly the Saviour of those who have believed; and of those who have not believed he is the Lord, until, by being brought to confess him, they shall receive the proper and well-adapted blessing for themselves."

These extracts might be multiplied; but time

will not permit, nor is it necessary. They show that this first great father of the Church, whose influence in his own day was vast—almost unbounded—when he undertook to formulate the Christian faith, put into his system the doctrine of penalty for discipline, for regeneration, for reformation; he saw, beyond the gloomy walls of the prison, the liberated captive restored to his lost manhood; beyond the fires of cleansing, the gold of character, freed from its old dross and refined, shining with its original lustre, in the light that falls from the face of God!

Let us now turn to Origen (186 A. D.—254), whose influence was even greater in the early Church than that of his master and teacher:

"As therefore God is a consuming fire, what is it that is to be consumed by him? We say it is wickedness and whatever proceeds from it, such as is figuratively called wood, hay, stubble. These are what God in the character of fire comsumes. And as it is evidently the wicked works of man that are denoted by the terms wood, hay, stubble, it is consequently easy to understand what is the nature of that fire by which they are to be consumed. * * He shall come also as a refiner's fire to purify rational nature from the alloy of wickedness. * * Rivers of fire are likewise said to go forth before the face of God for the purpose of consuming whatever of evil is admixed in all the soul."

"We assert that the Word, who is the wisdom of God, shall bring together all intelligent creatures, and convert them into his own perfection, through the instrumentalities of their free-will and their own exertions. And the consummation of all things will be the extinction of sin."

I admit that Origen held many fanciful and even grotesque notions; I admit that he did not trust his own doctrine of final restitution as far as he ought, for, while he argued that the doctrine was true, he was so fearful that it might be abused that he thought some people needed to have the opposite view preached to them in order to restrain them from sin; nevertheless, he stood for the truth itself, and his conclusions moulded the thought of multitudes. Says Prof. Harnack, "By proclaiming the reconciliation of Science with the Christian faith, of the highest culture with the gospel, Origen did more than any other man to win the Old World to the Christian religion."

Of Origen and his great influence, let Dr. Edward Beecher speak:—

"Two great facts stand out on the page of ecclesiastical history. One that the first system of Christian theology was composed and issued by Origen in the year 230 after Christ, of which a fundamental and essential element was the doctrine of the universal restoration of all fallen beings to their original happiness and union with

God. The second is that after the lapse of a little more than three centuries, in the year 544, this doctrine was for the first time condemned and anathematized as heretical. This was done, not in the general council, but in a local council called by the patriarch Mennas, at Constantinople, by the order of Justinian. During all this long interval, the opinions of Origen and of his various writings were an element of power in the whole Christian world. For a long time he stood high as the greatest luminary of the Christian world. He gave an impulse to the leading spirits of subsequent ages, and was honored by them as their greatest benefactor. At last, after all his scholars were dead, in the remote age of Justinian, he was anathematized as a heretic of the worst kind. * * * From and after this point, the doctrine of future eternal punishment reigned with undisputed sway during the middle ages that preceded the Reformation. What, then, was the state of facts in the leading theological schools of the Christian world, in the age of Origen and some centuries after? It was in brief this: There were at least six theological schools in the church at large. Of these six schools, one and only one was decidedly and earnestly in favor of the doctrine of future eternal punishment. One was in favor of the annihilation of the wicked. Two were in favor of the doctrine of universal restora-

tion on the principles of Origen, and two in favor of universal restoration on the principles of Theodore of Mopsuestia. * * * It is also true that the arguments by which they defended their views were never fairly stated and answered. Indeed, they were never stated at all. They may admit of a thorough answer and refutation, but even if so they were not condemned and anathematized on any such grounds, but simply in obedience to the arbitrary mandates of Justinian, whose final arguments were deposition and banishment for those who refused to do his will."—*History of Future Retribution*, pp. 176-189.

III.—LET US NOW SUM UP THE RESULTS OF OUR INVESTIGATION. LET US SEE WHAT POINTS WE HAVE ESTABLISHED, UPON THE TESTIMONY OF SCHOLARS WHO ARE BRIGHT AND SHINING LIGHTS IN ORTHODOX COMMUNIONS.

I have not quoted from a single one who will allow himself to be called a Universalist.

1.—We find regarding the rank and file of the Church that the central idea of their simple faith was the Good Shepherd *who saved the goats as well as the sheep.*

2.—We find regarding the great leaders and thinkers:

(1.) That it was the Alexandrian fathers who gave the world the first formal and systematic statement of Christian truth, and that an *essential*

part of this system was the doctrine of final restitution.

(2.) We find that this doctrine was never regarded as heretical, was never looked upon as a departure from the faith once delivered to the saints, *until the middle of the sixth century*, by a council called at Constantinople.

(3.) We find that this council was *not a general council of the Church*, but one called from a small territory, and backed by the order of a despotic emperor in the interests of a bigoted prelate.

(4.) We find, too, that it was not declared a heresy because its arguments were fairly stated, met and refuted; it was condemned and its advocates cursed, *in obedience to the arbitrary will of the Roman Emperor.*

(5.) We find that at this council the opposite doctrine of endless punishment was *first publicly recognized and adopted as a part of the creed of the Church*, although before this it had been more or less held by individuals.

It is noticeable, too, that this was just the time when the church was about to take that awful plunge into what, by common consent, has been called the DARK AGES.

I had thought to have treated this part of the subject also, this evening, but I found that the undertaking would be too great. Next Sunday evening, I shall trace the origin and growth of

the dark doctrine that eventually displaced the bright and hopeful creed of the earliest Christian centuries.

3.—We find regarding the great schools of Christendom —

One was located at Ephesus and taught annihilation; one at Carthage in north Africa and taught endless punishment;* the other four at Alexandria, Cæserea, Antioch and Edessa, taught universal restoration!

These are the plain and unadorned facts of history. If the argument from antiquity is worth anything, it belongs to the immortal hope, and not to the endless despair!

The doctrine of endless punishment is old, but it is not the oldest. Beyond the clouds that settled upon the world when the dark ages began, there is a realm of joy and sunshine. The nearer you come to the time when the Sun of righteousness arose with healing in his wings, the more you find of love to man, the more inspiring the outlook upon his destiny. The early Christians lived in an age before the echoes of the Master's words, his parables about the lost and their recovery, his teachings of the Father, his prayer upon the cross, had died away in the din of wrangling councils, the fierce contests of ambitious prelates and the howls of persecuting

* Dr. Beecher afterwards explains that *all* the theological schools of the early church were Universalist. Those teaching annihilation and endless punishment were schools of thought—not institutions. Those at Alexandria, Cesarea, Antioch and Edessa were all schools, and they were Universalist.

fanatics! They can better express his spirit than the great rulers of the church into whom entered the disposition of the old Roman conquerers, than the priests of the church into whom entered the disposition of the Roman augurs and sooth-sayers!

The doctrine of endless punishment is old, but it is not permanent. It was no part of the faith of the early church, it will be no part of the faith of the church triumphant. It holds its place to-day by custom and tradition, not by reason. It is a part of the theology which the Western world received from Augustine,—a theology that is as alien to the teachings and character of Jesus Christ, as the hell which it supports and cherishes is to the heaven for which we hope! Born in superstition, reared in darkness, supported by tradition, this cruel and blighting doctrine of woe, shall yet die by the hand of enlightened faith and reverent reason! And when the earth is cleared from the incubus of its oppressive and desolating presence, then will the children of men sing with gladness, "Hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

VI.

RISE AND GROWTH OF THE DOCTRINE OF ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.

[Sunday Evening, Nov. 16, 1890.]

Last Sunday evening we found from testimony that cannot be gainsaid, that the early belief of the Church was that of ultimate restoration to righteousness of all souls that have wandered from God. The faith of the early Christians as recorded upon the walls of the Roman Catacombs, was a faith in the Good Shepherd who would at last save the goats as well as the sheep. The doctrine, as held by the great leaders of the Church and taught in the schools of Christian learning, up to the middle of the sixth century, was the restitution of all things. But at the council of Constantinople, the theology of Origen was condemned, and the theology of Augustine thenceforth reigned with undisputed sway.

If, therefore, the argument from antiquity counts, it belongs, not to the oracles of despair, but to the prophets of hope; not to those who blot out the stars shining through the cypress trees, but to those who fling across the dark abyss of the future the rainbow of God's unchanging love!

This evening we are to inquire where the doctrine of Endless Punishment took its rise in the Christian Church; by what agencies it was propagated; and what were its effects upon mankind. I am not to inquire how the idea first entered the human mind; but where it first entered Christian history.

I forewarn you that there will be very little original matter in this discourse. I do not feel at liberty to manufacture history, so the largest part of my work this evening will be reading from authorities.

I. What was the origin of the doctrine of Endless Punishment? Where and when was the stream of Christian history first tainted by its defilement?

Although it did not become widely prevalent for several centuries it was held by some almost from the beginning of the period succeeding the apostles. It first appears distinctly and unmistakably in the writings of TERTULLIAN of Carthage, whose term of active theological life extended from the year 190 A. D. to the year 220 A. D. The foundations of the entire system which afterwards became the creed of the Western Church, were laid by Tertullian. One of the stones in this foundation was the doctrine of Endless Punishment.

Farrar says: "The first indisputable trace of

this view occurs in the fierce pages of the Montanist Tertullian, whose devoutly ferocious disposition offered a fitting engine for its propagation." —*Mercy and Judgment,* p. 23.

Thayer says: "He is the first, as far as can be ascertained, who expressly affirmed, and argued the question, that the torments of the damned would be equal in duration to the happiness of the blessed."—*Origin and History of the Doctrine.*

The spirit of this man may be learned from a page of his own writings upon this subject: "You are fond of your spectacles," he says to the Pagans, "but there are other spectacles; that day disbelieved, derided by the nations, the last and eternal day of judgment, when all ages shall be swallowed up in one conflagration; what a variety of spectacles shall then appear! How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many kings and false gods,together with Jove himself, groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness!—so many magistrates who persecuted the name of the Lord, liquefying in fiercer flames than they ever kindled against Christians; so many sage philosophers blushing in raging fire, with their scholars whom they persuaded to despise God, and to disbelieve the resurrection, and so many poets shuddering before the tribunal, not of Rhadamanthus, not of Minos, but of the disbelieved Christ? Then shall we hear tragedians more tuneful in the

expression of their own sufferings; then shall we see the dancers far more sprightly amidst the flames; the charioteer all red-hot in his burning car; and the wrestlers hurled, not upon the accustomed list, but upon a plain of fire. There are sights which no quæstor or priest can now procure a Roman audience the pleasure of beholding, but the Christian can even now by faith behold these things in pictures of the imagination."—*De Spec.*, p. 30.

Tertullian would have added materially to the applause with which Joseph Cook's lecture on endless sin and suffering was greeted in Boston. Nothing can better show the petrifying effect of this doctrine upon the human heart than such passages as the one just given. Guizot, indeed, tries to mitigate the offense of Tertullian against the moral feelings of humanity, but Milman frankly owns that "it would be wiser for Christianity, retreating upon its genuine records in the New Testament, to disclaim this fierce African, than to identify itself with his furious invectives, by unsatisfactory apologies for their unchristian fanaticism." These are the earliest traces of this hideous doctrine. Tertullian enjoyed the unenviable notoriety of introducing into the thought of Christendom the dogma which has ever since been the disgrace of theology and the stumbling-block of thousands of honest souls. Bear it in mind,

and never forget, that it was Tertullian and not Jesus who lighted the fires of the hell that the Church has preached for centuries. It was the furious and vengeful African and not the gentle Nazarene who invented the creed of terror and despair.

II. What were the circumstances in which this doctrine took its rise? What were the conditions that made it possible?

We note, first of all a growing *exclusiveness* on the part of the Church. It did not take long for the early Christians to depart from the spirit of their Great Master. The lesson he had taught his first disciples, not to forbid any one from doing good and casting out devils, whether he followed with them or not, soon faded away. It did not take very long to shape the dogma of the visible Church so stringently, that only in it, as in the ark of Noah, did the Christians see help and salvation; outside of it was certain destruction. Thus they came to regard themselves as the special favorites of heaven, and to look with intolerance and scorn upon their neighbors. They began to feel that they themselves were safe, and thus could view with infinite composure the fate of others.

Next a feeling of *retaliation* for the opprobrium heaped upon them by their heathen fellow-citizens. "The belief in a millennial kingdom soon to be established grew weak in the second century, and

in the third may be said to have disappeared. But the vision of a lake that burned with endless fires for the enemies of Christ, the tortures in reserve for those who persecuted his faithful followers, still appealed to a Church that existed in the face of a perpetual hatred and scorn on the part of the heathens. It was impossible that recriminations should not be heard from heathens and Christians alike. The latter told their adversaries of a day of judgment, when the punishment which had been withheld in this world, should fall upon them in awful severity,—when the final sentence should be pronounced which remanded them to the tortures of endless suffering."—*Allen, Continuity of Christian Thought*, p. 122.

Instead of blessing those who cursed them, doing good to those who hated them, praying for those who despitefully used and persecuted them, these Christians of Tertullian's time said: "If we cannot ourselves take vengeance upon you in this world, God will make you smart in the next."

Still further, *degrading views of God.* Such writers as Tertullian looked upon God as a magnified man, with human passions, with the human thirst for revenge, with human methods of thought and action. They were not much in advance of the pagans themselves. They had, it is true, only one God, while the pagans had many, but they made their one about as bad as all the pagan gods

put together. Indeed Tertullian believed that God existed in bodily form: "Whatever is, is a body; nothing is incorporeal but what is not, therefore God is a body, although he is also a spirit; for a spirit is a body of its own kind in a peculiar form." Tertullian also insists upon the human passions in God: "As we dwell upon the goodness of God, so his hatred and his anger should also be recognized against all that oppose his will."

Certain plagues and calamities that about this time fell upon the people were interpreted as divine judgments upon the heathen. It is only one step from a God who deals capriciously or revengefully in this world to a God who deals capriciously or revengefully in the next. Alger says: "The calamities of this life were regarded as tokens, revengeful or loving, of the ruling deities, now pleased, now enraged. And when their votaries or victims had passed into the eternal state, how natural to suppose them still favored or cursed by the passionate wiles of these irresponsible gods."—*Hist. Doct. of Fut. Life.*

Under these conditions, so far as the early Christian Church is concerned, grew up the doctrine that first took definite shape in the writings of Tertullian. It was introduced through bigotry, vengeance and superstition.

III. Let us now take another step. In the year

252 A. D. we come to the period of CYPRIAN'S greatest activity.

The exclusiveness of which I spoke a moment ago, was still farther developed by Cyprian. Under his teaching the doctrine of the Church assumed greater rigidity and severity. Dean Milman says:

"Cyprian held that within the pale of the Church, under the law of the bishop, were Christ and salvation; without it the realm of the devil and the world of perdition. The faith of the heretic and schismatic was no faith, his holiness no holiness, his martyrdom no martyrdom."—*Hist. of Lat. Chris.*, 1 : 87.

The spirit of Cyprian was transmitted to later times. If a man orthodox was burned at the stake, he was a martyr; if heretic, he was simply a man burned—that was all.

The stress that Cyprian laid upon the visible Church as a means—as the only means—of salvation, may be learned from his address to Demetrius: "The world is nearing its end and the coming of anti-Christ is at hand. The earth has grown old and exhausted, life is failing at its sources, the sun is losing its heat, the rain diminishes, the harvests grow thin, the disemboweled mountains no longer yield the precious ores, young men are born prematurely old,—everywhere are the signs of decay and approaching

dissolution. Meantime the Church remains as an ark of deliverance from the wrath of God. The Christians may seem to share with their neighbors in the troubles of the time, but they who have a confidence in the good things that a future life will bring, do not in reality suffer from the assault of present evils. To the pagans the Church offers a refuge if they will turn to it. But the opportunity is brief; the end is near; after this world is over there is no hope, no possibility of repentance. The pain of punishment will then be without the fruit of repentance, tears and prayers will be of no avail. Here life is either saved or lost. So long as one remains in this world no repentance is too late. Death constitutes the line between hope and despair; it puts an end to human probation. Hereafter a punishment devouring with living flames, will burn up the condemned in an ever-burning Gehenna; to their agonies will be neither end or respite. Souls with their bodies will be reserved in infinite tortures for suffering."—*Ad. Demetrianum*, pp. 23–5.

Thus hand in hand went the exclusiveness of the Church in this world and the doctrine of unending retribution in the next. Bigotry here and hell hereafter were inseparable companions.

IV. Let us now come down to the time of AUGUSTINE, who was born in the year 354 A. D. His conversion to Christianity, under Ambrose at

Milan, was one of the most momentous events in the history of the Western Church. A man of powerful intellect, he put into system the ideas of Tertullian, stamped upon them the impress of his own thought, and shaped the theology of the West for more than a thousand years. He embodied the doctrines of Tertullian in the Church of Cyprian. The Church was the only agency through which the divine influence was manifested, and without this influence no one could be saved.

"The Church was the predestined assemblage of those to whom, and to whom alone, salvation was possible; the Church scrupled not to surrender the rest of mankind to that inexorable damnation entailed upon the human race by the sin of their first parents. As the Church, by the jealous exclusion of all heretics, drew around itself a narrower circle; this startling limitation of the divine mercies was compensated by the great extension of its borders, which now comprehended all other baptized Christians. The only point in this theory at which human nature uttered a feeble remonstrance was the abandonment of infants who never knew the distinction between good and evil, to eternal fires. The heart of Augustine wrung from his reluctant reason, which trembled at its own inconsistency, a milder damnation in their favor. But some of his more remorseless disciples

disclaimed the illogical softness of their Master." —*Milman, Lat. Chris.*, 1:171.

In regard to the special doctrine whose history we are tracing, Gieseler says: "In the West it was Augustine who rigorously contested the opinion of the termination of hell-torments, and set upon it the stamp of heresy."

Allen says: "The doctrine of endless punishment assumed in the writings of Augustine a prominence and rigidity which had no parallel in the earlier history of theology, which had no warrant in the New Testament, and which savors of the teaching of Mohammed more than of Christ. Hitherto even in the West, it had been an open question whether the punishment hereafter of sin unrepented of and not forsaken was to be endless. Augustine himself has left on record the fact that some, very many indeed, still fell back on the mercy and love of God, as a ground of hope for the ultimate restoration of humanity. He rallies those tender-hearted Christians who cannot accept the doctrine of endless torment."—*Continuity of Chris. Thought*, pp. 164–5.

The theology of the West, whose foundations were laid by Tertullian, upon whose structure Cyprian wrought, was completed by Augustine. It gradually displaced the milder views of Clement and Origen, until at last Origen was condemned as a heretic in the middle of the sixth century,

and Augustinianism, with its exclusive Church, its despotic God, and its endless fires reigned supreme.

V. We are now upon the verge of that period of history known as the Dark Ages. Let us follow the doctrine of Endless Punishment into this period.

Of this period it has been well said: "Few men who are not either priests or monks would not have preferred to live in the best days of the Athenian or of the Roman republics, in the age of Augustus or in the age of the Antonines, rather than in any period that elapsed between the triumph of Christianity and the fourteenth century." No wonder that such a doctrine flourished during such an age.

The Northern Barbarians had conquered the Roman State, the Church had now to conquer the Barbarians. By this time the Church had developed. Its organization was perfected. Its machinery was complete. But it retained the spirit of Imperial Rome, and the aims of Imperial Rome. Its purpose was a world-wide external conquest. The founder of the Church had said that the Kingdom of God was within; the rulers of the Church at Rome said that the Kingdom of God was outward and visible. Territorial extension was the great object.

By what agencies was this object accomplished?

By keeping the people they sought to influence in *ignorance*. One of the Gregories declared that "ignorance was the mother of devotion." The price of heaven was intellectual stupor.

By *materializing religion*,—by making worship as sensuous as possible,—by addressing the eye rather than the understanding or heart.

By the use of *fear*. They made the interdict, excommunication, and the flames of hell their instrumentalities. Allen says: "The doctrine of an endless punishment for all who rejected the claims of Christ must have been from an early period the underlying belief which gave the strongest sanction to the Church's authority." Lecky says: "Rude tribes accustomed in their own lands to pay absolute obedience to their priests, found themselves in a foreign country, confronted by a priesthood far more imposing than that which they had left, by gorgeous ceremonies well-fitted to entice, and by threats of coming judgment well-fitted to scare their imaginations. Disconnected from all their old associations, they bowed before the majesty of civilization, and the Latin religion, like the Latin language, though with many adulterations, reigned over the new society. The doctrine of exclusive salvation and the doctrine of dæmons had an

admirable missionary power. The first produced an ardor of proselytizing which the polytheist could never rival; while the pagan, who was easily led to recognize the Christian God, was menaced with eternal fire if he did not take the further step of breaking off from his old divinities."—*Hist. of Europ. Morals*, pp. 179–80.

By these means were the rude tribes of the North brought under the dominion of the Church. During this period, as one may find by consulting the pages of Milman or Lecky, the notion of hell ran rampant. The flames raged unchecked. The scene of future retribution was made as terrible as the morbid imagination of priests and prelates could make it. Elements gathered from all mythologies and superstitions were put into it, till the human mind sank exhausted under the accumulation of horrors. The darkest period of Christian history is precisely the period during which this doctrine flourished most luxuriantly. It was the appeal of priestcraft to ignorance.

VI. What were some of the consequences? What was the practical outcome of this awful doctrine?

The results are seen, first of all,

1. In the immense increase of *insanity*.

"The received opinions about eternal torture, and ever present dæmons, and the continued strain upon the imagination in dwelling upon an

unseen world, were pre-eminently fitted to produce madness in those who were at all predisposed to it, and where insanity had actually appeared, to determine the form and complexion of the hallucinations of the maniac. Theology supplying all the images that acted most powerfully upon the imagination, most madness for many centuries took a theological cast."—*Lecky*, p. 86.

2. In the rise of *asceticism.*

Under terror of coming judgment, thousands forsook the world, friends, families, and all, and fled into the wilderness, thinking that in isolation and penance they could alone lead a life that would save them from the flames of the future.

3. In persecutions for *heresy.*

In an age when conformity with the Church counted more than purity of life, the sword was whetted. Farrar declares: "These pictures of hell,—these human additions to and fancies concerning the future state of retribution, have been the chief cause of religious persecution. It is the opinion of a modern critic that the two words in the Vulgate, *et ardent*,—'and they are burned',—spoken actually of dead boughs, and metaphorically of the state of souls so long as they are severed from Christ, kindled the infamous fires of the Inquisition. It was these doctrines which made men think that they did God service by thrusting martyrs to gasp out their souls in the flames of

Toledo and of Smithfield. 'As the souls of heretics are hereafter to be eternally burning in hell,'—such was the reasoning of Queen Mary Tudor in defense of her awful persecution,—'there can be nothing more proper than for me to imitate the Divine Vengeance by burning them on earth.' The popular belief in the inconceivable brutalities which (as they were told) went on in hell, made men indifferent to the guilt and shame of inflicting torments on the bodies of their fellow-men." —*Mercy and Judgment*, p. 116.

4. In the rise of the practice of *granting indulgences.*

The ideas of hell became so awful that some mitigation was at length devised in the invention of Purgatory. But even this was devised in the interests of the Church. For although the spirits of the dead might be detained in Purgatory to be fitted for heaven, they were allowed to slip through to hell unless the surviving friends paid liberally for the prayers of the Church; so that hell became the instrumentality of terror by which priestcraft robbed the living. "The outrageous and notorious immorality of the monasteries during the century before the reformation was chiefly due to their great wealth; and that immorality, as the writings of Erasmus and Ulric Von Hutten show, gave a powerful impulse to the new movement, while the abuses of the indulgences were the immediate

cause of the revolt of Luther. But these things arrived only after many centuries of successful fraud. The religious terrorism that was unscrupulously employed had done its work, and the chief riches of Christendom had passed into the coffers of the Church."

I have shown, in this imperfect and fragmentary way, how this doctrine took its rise, its development into ghastly and horrible forms, the purposes for which it was used by the Church, and some of its direful consequences. In its entire course there is not a single redeeming feature. It is condemned at the bar of Reason, Scripture, and History.

[Note: This lecture was originally entirely unwritten, with the exception of two or three pages of historical references. I have simply aimed to give an outline of the subject, with the appropriate authorities under each point. The lecture as delivered exactly has gone—never to be recalled. —M. D. S.]

VII.

THE NEW MOTIVES.

[Sunday Evening, Nov. 23, 1890.]

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."—ACTS 10:38.

"He that doeth good is of God."—3 JOHN 11.

Some time ago I was present at the organization of a new church and preached the ordination sermon of its minister. In the evening after I had gone to my room at the hotel, I sat alone with my conscience, and something like the following conversation took place:

CONSCIENCE: What did all this mean in which you were concerned to-day? Why did you help organize that church? Why did you induct that young man into the ministry? Why are you in the ministry yourself?

MYSELF: Your questions are very abrupt; I cannot answer them as suddenly as you propound them. Give me time to think. At a more convenient season I will send for thee!

CONSCIENCE: Why was that fine building in which you regularly preach erected? Was it simply that people might come together to listen

to the sermons that emanate from the pulpit and the music that floats from the gallery? Is that all? And if that is all, and you are an earnest man, what do you think about it?

But without giving me a moment to think about it, the questioner went on piling "hills on hills and Alps on Alps":

If you throw aside the old sanctions of religion, what have you left? What is there to inspire you? Why should you open your lips or lift your hands? What did you mean by preaching that sermon to-night? What do you expect that church you helped organize to accomplish? Come, now, be honest!

I roused myself. I also began to question: If I do not believe that the vast majority of the responsible portion of the human race is pouring like the torrent of Niagara, over the precipice of time into a bottomless abyss, why should I preach and work? Why should I remain in the ministry another day? If I do not believe that there is an endless hell of some description from which the souls of men are to be snatched "as brands from the burning," what is the use of church or ministry?

If, on the other hand, I believe that in every soul and throughout the whole universe, the good will at last put the evil under its feet, as the archangel the dragon, why do I preach that doctrine? What effect will it have upon the grand result? Why

not be silent? disband your societies? raze your edifices to the ground?

I was now fully roused and I answered impulsively,

I. FIRST: I PREACH THIS DOCTRINE OF THE OUTCOME BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT IT IS TRUE.

No matter now *why* I believe it; that has nothing to do with the present question. The only commendation that truth needs is *truth.* It has no apologies to offer. It has no excuses to make. It does not "bend low, and in a bondman's key, with bated breath and whispering humbleness," ask leave to be. It asserts its right to the scepter, and mounts the throne with unfaltering tread!

I fear I have but little patience with those timid souls who say, "All that you teach may be true; but it is dangerous. It will unsettle people. It will make them reckless. They will throw aside all restraints; they will plunge deeper and deeper and deeper into depravity. Be careful, be careful!

My only reply is,—if it be true it is NOT dangerous! It may be made so indeed, by those who imperfectly apprehend it, or by those who wilfully pervert it; but in itself, it is not dangerous. And as for unsettling people, let the truth unsettle them, and that right speedily! If they have taken refuge in a fortress of lies, the sooner it is demolished the better!

A friend of mine not long ago received a letter

from a prominent evangelical clergyman of a neighboring city, in which he said: "I do not believe in some of the things I preach any more than you do; but I consider them necessary for the people. They will not do right unless we hold a whip over their heads." This is precisely the principle upon which many men are to-day preaching the darker and sterner elements of theology. The people need them. They will not do right without them. They must feel that undying flames are crackling to receive their souls, or they will not be pure and just and honest. It is dangerous to teach them the real truth on the subject!

Frederick Denison Maurice, one of the sweetest spirits in the established church of England, said: "I cannot base morality upon the dread of some future punishments, upon the expectation of some future rewards. I believe the attempts to make them moral by such means have always failed, are failing now more egregiously and monstrously than ever. I believe that they fail because they are in conformity with our notions, and not with God's purpose as set forth in Holy Scripture. There I find God using punishments to make men sensible of the great misery of being at war with his will, showing them the blessed results to their spirits, to their bodies, to nations, to families, to individuals, to the father and the child, to the master and the workman, to the persons who subdue

the earth, and to the earth which they subdue, from conformity to his will."

I say again that truth is not dangerous. It is falsehood that is to be feared. The things that are to be feared are theological misrepresentations of God; making him darkness instead of light; writing "Hate" and "Vengeance" for his names instead of "Love," the fair title that glitters like a star upon the brow of the Eternal; calling him "Fiend" instead of "Father." These are the things to be feared.

And more. It is dishonesty in the pulpit as well as in the pew that is to be feared. It is believing one thing and preaching another that is dangerous. These are the things that undermine human confidence in all things and lead to mental and moral anarchy. Is it so that a lie can do more for men than the truth? Is it so that fear is better for them than knowledge? No! the time is gone by, if it ever existed, when people are to be driven to heaven by a whip of falsehood.

I am told sometimes that certain scientific doctrines, such as evolution, are dangerous. Like an earthquake beneath a city, such an idea will heave the solid ground under all religion. The question is not, Are these affirmations of science dangerous? or are they safe? The question forever and ever is, Are they true? There is no skepticism so great as that which refuses to accept and follow what

one believes to be true, for fear of consequences. No cowardice is so great as that which refuses to go where truth leads, though it be to the scaffold and to the stake.

The consequences of NOT following ought to concern us more. There may, indeed, be temporary and incidental disturbance; but in the end, when we have become readjusted, truth will vindicate itself. There is always disturbance in the ground where a new seed is planted; there is still more when it bursts and begins to shoot upward. But when it blossoms and bears fruit, it is vindicated!

II. BUT THE QUESTIONER IS NOT YET SATISFIED. IF YOUR DOCTRINE IS TRUE, WHAT FOLLOWS?

Is not the objection still in full force, that you have nothing to work for? That you are left without motive?

Not so; every new truth that comes into the world creates the new motives that rally its adherents and make them strive for victory. Every righteous principle furnishes reasons for its proclamation. Take this idea, then,—*that in every individual and throughout the whole universe, the good will at last put the evil under its feet.* What motives does it furnish, aside from the fact that we believe it true?

1. *That of helping the good and fighting the evil.*

This truth assumes that there is evil in the world,

that it is all about us and within us, that it is a serious and awful thing; and the thought it impresses is, that here is the place and now is the time to fight that evil. It transfers the emphasis from the future to the present. It declares that it is far more noble to try to save men from the actual hells of this world than from the fancied hells of the next. Whatever may be true or not true of the future, one thing is certain—there is work for every earnest soul, for every willing hand,—work upon this planet, work at this very hour! So long as there are hells of vice and crime and pauperism and disease and drunkenness in this world, so long the spirit of humanity—the very spirit of Jesus Christ—will not be without motives for its exercise. The fire and brimstone are here. Here rage the waves of the burning lake. Here let the saving arm be outstretched.

If we want an example, where can we find a better than is furnished by the text? "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." And when he had that power, how did he use it? "Who went about doing good." In those five words you have the whole philosophy of life. "What is the object of life?" How often has that question been asked. Has a better answer ever been given? Then the text adds, "For God was with him." And John tells us that God is with everyone who does good. "He that doeth good

is of God." Whoever accepts such a ministry as this, be he priest or layman, whoever is willing to do all the good he can in this world,—waiting for what he can do in the next till he reaches it—that one has the presence and the help of God himself—the same presence that was with Jesus, the same help that sustained him.

It is related by Edward Everett Hale, that on one occasion a lady said to him, "To you the dedication of this church means simply one more name on the calendar. To the people of this town, it means better books, better music, better sewerage, better health and better life, less drunkenness, more purity and better government." I hope something of this sort is what that church I helped to organize will mean to the people in that community. I hope something of the sort is what this church means to this community. In the Jewish legend, when the people came to Marah, they found the waters so bitter they could not drink them. And the Lord showed Moses a tree to cast into the waters, and when he had done so they were made sweet. Every church should be such a tree, cast into the bitter waters of human life to make them sweet.

Indeed, it may be gravely doubted whether the old motives influence any of the churches as they once did. Their attention is turning more and more to practical humanitarian work, to that work

which is intended to bring the kingdom of God into the hearts of men and the life of society here and now. In what is called Foreign Mission Work, the emphasis is changing. It is found that those whom we call heathen do not joyfully accept the glad tidings that the souls of their ancestors are in hell, suffering endless and immitigable torment; and that they themselves, if they become Christians, shall never, never meet those who have gone before. One cannot help admiring the old Saxon chief. When the missionary led him down to the waters of baptism, he paused on the brink of the stream and asked: "Will this act separate me from my Pagan ancestors in the next world?" "Yes!" The chief proudly drew himself up and turned away, refusing to enter a heaven whose gates were so narrow, preferring to be damned—if damned he must be—in company with the good and great of his tribe.

It is said that when Boniface was sent to preach the gospel to the Franks, he found in their territory a huge oak which they had consecrated to the god of thunder. Under this they held their courts, performed their superstitious rites, and offered sacrifices to the god. Boniface resolved to put an end to these superstitions by applying the axe to the huge trunk of this object of their veneration. The Franks, as he plied the axe, gathered around him and looked on in awe and wonder.

As blow after blow fell upon the great tree, they confidently expected a thunderbolt would rend the sky, and strike the sacrilegious axeman to the earth. But when no such interposition followed their fear was changed to reverence and they accepted the new religion. When we apply the axe to this deadly poison-tree of endless suffering, with which so many superstitions are associated, men cry out in fear. The consequences must be awful if we destroy it. But after it falls, some better growth will take its place, and the safety of society will be all the more assured.

There can be no higher motive for any individual or any church than this—*the world needs help and I can give it.* Quench the fires of these present hells, and the lurid flames that glare upon the horizon of the future, will melt into the calm, yellow sunshine that predicts the breaking of a fairer day.

2. *This truth of the final triumph of good over evil in the individual, as well as in the universe, furnishes, another motive in the possibilities it assumes to be wrapped up in each human soul.*

We look at men to see what they are, and to consider what can be made of them. We feel assured that there is something in every one that, for its own sake, is worth culture and development. We work for them because they are capable of something better. We are not influenced

so much by considerations of endless fire, as we are by the question, What can be done for this man? What can be made of him?

It doth not yet appear what any of us shall be. It doth not yet appear what the least developed specimen of our race shall be. It doth not yet appear what any dwarfed and sinning soul shall be,—when freed from its peculiar conformation of skull, when freed from the grossness of the animal, when freed from ignorance and blindness, it rises to higher conditions. A blot on the earth, it shall become a star of the firmament. A bit of coal in the grimy mine, it shall glow with all the splendor of a diamond upon the brow of the King of Kings. A caterpillar upon the earth, it shall unfold into a rainbow-winged angel in the sunlight of heaven.

Carelessly you pick up the acorn in the forest, and throw it aside. The poet takes it and sees its wondrous possibilities. Coming centuries unroll before him. He sees in the dim vista the majestic oak. He hears the laughter of children at play beneath its shade. He sees the wayfaring man reposing under its shadow; leaning against its trunk, the young man whispers his love; kneeling upon its roots, the mourner pours forth her sorrow! All this and more the poet sees, as he holds in his hand the acorn you have scorned. All this and more does the eye of Infinite Love behold in the souls that men have given over to evil and re-

manded to perdition. Fairer growths than we ever dreamed shall rise into forms of majesty and beauty from these unsightly germs.

3. *The truth of the final triumph of good over evil furnishes another tremendous motive in its power of consolation.*

Let me take an instance from fiction that has its counterpart in many a fact. In "John Ward, Preacher," there is a dissolute character, one Tom Davis, but a man of noble impulses, who rushes into a great fire to save a little child, and comes out so completely exhausted, scorched by fire and suffocated with smoke, that he drops to earth and expires in a few moments. His wife is almost frantic. Elder Dean tells her that she ought to be resigned to God's justice. He tells her that "good folks ought to be glad when sinners go to the bad place, even when they are belonging to them." The woman with nothing but her narrow creed to support her says that she believes it all but that she never can love God again.

"He never giv' Tom any chance, an' how am I goin' to love him now? Tom was born, as you might say, drinkin'. His father died in a drunken fit, an' his mother giv' it to her babe with her milk. Then what schoolin' did he get? Nothin', 'less it was his mother lickin' him. Tom often told me that. He hadn't no trade learned neither; jest rafted with men as bad as him. Is it any wonder

he wasn't converted?.....I ain't denyin' religion or anything like that. I'm a Christian an' a member; but I can't love Him; so there's no use talkin'—I can't love Him."

And on the preacher's lips there was no message of hope; nothing but the stern, unqualified message —"The soul that sinneth, it shall die!"

You ask me what else could be said in such a case? I should have said this: My good woman God is the same in the next world, and in all worlds, that he is in this, and the name that in all worlds and from everlasting is written across his shining brow is LOVE! There is no sea in this universe upon which our life-barks can be launched where God is not still our guide and pilot. "We cannot drift beyond his love and care!" The very nobility of heart which prompted your husband to rush into that fire to save another life at the sacrifice of his own, is the best proof in the world that there was something better in him, whose growth was checked here by his hard condition in life; but now that the hand of death has broken the shackles of the flesh, the growth of that nobler nature which was in him, will be unhindered; and in some fairer clime, under a brighter sun, and with more favorable surroundings, it will blossom and bring forth fruit in the gardens of the Lord.

I should have turned upon the preacher and said: Perish forever the diabolical creed that would shut

the gates of opportunity, the gates of heaven, in the face of the worst man on earth who died to save another! Perish forever the theology of darkness which sends to an endless hell any soul that has followed, however feebly and afar off, in the path of sacrifice which Jesus trod on his way to Calvary and the cross!

Thousands of souls are in need of this consolation,—in need of the other part of that ministry which was assigned to Jesus, who not only went about doing good, but also "healing all that were oppressed of the devil." Translated into modern phrase, we may say, "dispelling superstition, banishing that cruel and slavish fear of a personal devil and an endless hell that oppresses multitudes of trembling souls." How many need this ministry to lift the woe from their own hearts and the awful shadow from the graves of their dead!

III. My questioner asked me in that conference the other night: "If you believe that in every soul and throughout the whole universe the good will at last put the evil under its feet, why do you preach it?"

I turned upon that questioner and said, "If I believed in anything else, I should leave the ministry to-morrow!" IN THIS VERY THOUGHT I FIND MY HIGHEST INSPIRATION.

If I believed, as many do, in the existence of a personal devil, who for the last six thousand years

has been having his own way in this world; who has so far beaten God in every battle that has been joined; who, by the common teaching on the subject, must now have a kingdom so vast that the kingdom of God is but a petty province compared with it,—I should not care to serve so helpless a God! What respect could we have for a being who, with all his omnipotence, so manages things in his own universe that Satan becomes virtual monarch and hell is in the majority? A helpless and imbecile king—a Louis XVI,—can inspire no reverence or zeal, whether his throne be on earth or in heaven. No swords will be drawn for him, no lives will be pledged in his service. But for the God whom we worship, Father and Ruler, tender and strong, beautiful and loving,—secure in the final affection and allegiance of every subject, —for that God we may dare to do and die!

There is all the more reason for earnestness upon our part, when we know that our labor for men will not be in vain! When the issue is uncertain or foredoomed to failure, the heart sinks and the arm becomes powerless. But when we feel that some day the least and lowest creature who bears the divine image, blurred and marred though it be, shall be brought to the holiness and joy of the Father's house and presence, the fainting heart is revived and the falling arm is lifted. I do not understand how any one can be cheerful or enthu-

siastic who believes that, in spite of all our sermons and prayers, our churches and Sunday schools, our Christian associations and our missionary societies; in spite of everything that is being done by earnest men and noble women,—all but the merest fraction of the responsible creatures for whom we strive are going down to ruin and misery endless and hopeless. If I believed that it would not only blot from the earth the last patch of sunshine, but it would so paralyze my energies that I never more could put my hand to the plough. If I believed that, I said to my inward questioner, there would be no object in remaining in the ministry. I should hang my harp on the willows and let those sing the songs of Zion who still could find a tongue.

While confident of the consummation, let us be well assured that it is linked by inexorable logic to every effort we put forth. It will not come of its own accord. It cannot be separated from human work. The chariot may be hindered, the kingdom may be delayed, by those who are careless and unfaithful. The sooner every brain is alive, every heart in sympathy, and every hand busy, the sooner will the temple be builded. The vision of the outcome ought not to sing us a cradle lullaby, but a battle song.

It remains for us to put our ideas into practice, to extend their influence more widely, to make all our agencies more powerful. Let us

not say, "Success is certain, therefore let us be idle." The true motto is, "Success is certain; therefore work, work, work the harder!" On the eve of victory, let us not fling down our arms; on the skirts of the harvest, let us not throw away our sickles; on the very steps of the throne, let us not turn back from the coronation. Sound the trumpet along the entire line! In all the departments of our work, in the Sunday School, in the young people's societies, everywhere, let us be more vigorous and useful. Extend to our weaker interests a helping hand. Unite with them in the work. Make their cause our own. We cannot be isolated. To stand alone, to stand idle, is death. Activity is life. Sympathy is life. Victory is life.

"We are living, we are dwelling
In a grand and awful time;
In an age on ages telling,
To be living is sublime!
Hark! the waking up of nations—
Gog and Magog to the fray;
Hark! what soundeth is creation
Groaning for her latter day.

"Will ye play, then,—will ye dally
With your music and your wine?
Up! it is Jehovah's rally—
God's own arm hath need of thine!
Hark! the onset! Will ye fold your
Faith-clad arms in lazy lock?
Up, oh up! thou drowsy soldier,
Worlds are charging to the shock.

"Worlds are charging—heaven beholding,
Thou hast but an hour to fight;
Now, the blazoned cross unfolding;
On—right onward—for the right!
Strike, let all the soul within you
For the truth's sake go abroad;
Strike, let every nerve and sinew
Tell on ages, tell for God!"

VIII.

THE REAL PENALTY OF SIN.

[Sunday Evening, Nov. 30, 1890.]

"Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."—GAL. 6:7.

Because we reject the doctrine of Endless Punishment, we do not therefore reject the idea of Penalty. We emphasize it. We do not dispense with the element of fear. It is as much a part of human nature as hope. If it no longer influences as of yore, it is because men have grown skeptical of the fabulous objects presented to it. What shall we fear? Not *the wrath of God.* We do not need protection from Him. He ought never to be so presented as to make men shrink from his presence. What shall we fear? Not *the hideous hells of the future.* This is the fear of superstition. It is vanishing, because it is baseless.

What shall we fear? There is something real to be dreaded, and that is SIN. Not the *sin of Adam.* Let him take care of that; it does not concern you and me. Not *original or inherited depravity.* This is mere fiction. But that which is no fiction is one's own *personal wrong-doing!* This is more terrible than all the imaginary frowns of that Deity

whom men have pictured sitting clothed with thunder and armed with lightnings in the skies; more terrible than the lurid flames that burn beyond the horizon.

> "For myself alone I doubt;
> All is well, I know, without;
> I alone the beauty mar,
> I alone the music jar."

While sin is real, penalty is also real. It is positive as transgression, and goes hand in hand with it, an indissoluble brotherhood. While the hells of superstition have vanished, the hells that are constantly formed by such dark builders as evil passions, evil thoughts, evil conduct, evil character, remain. For these devils and their angels, there is woe enough prepared.

I. THE REALITY OF RETRIBUTION.

While we reject the midnight fancies that have so long held sway, we discern more clearly than ever, how in the structure of the human soul and body, in the constitution of society, in the laws of nature, is written in new lines the old warning, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." What Milton wrote of Satan is true of every sinner:

> "—Within him hell he brings,
> And round about him; nor from hell
> One step no more than from himself can fly
> By change of place."

And the great arch-fiend cries out:—

> "Me miserable! which way shall I fly
> Infinite wrath and infinite despair?
> Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell!"

(1) The penalty that comes through the operation of these laws is certain. It is not arbitrarily inflicted, nor can it be arbitrarily set aside.

We have been taught that man could escape the consequences of his ill-doing by seeking refuge in the blood of Christ,—that one drop would wash away the stains of a life-time and leave pure and white the worst mass of corruption that still retained the human form. "Only believe!" To teach that by any magical process, any touch of a supernatural power in response to a prayer or cry uttered at the last moment, such marvelous transformation may be wrought, is to put a premium upon wickedness and encourage the transgressor. Easy forgiveness makes sin defiant. Men will violate law, so long as they are assured that some Divine interference will, in the end, set aside the consequences, because some Divine victim has borne them. A number of years ago, when a great wave of defalcations swept over the East, the clergymen of New Haven got together, and seriously questioned whether they themselves had not been partially guilty in preaching too much vicarious sacrifice and too little personal righteousness and responsibility. It was a wise question to ask.

Do not misunderstand me. I shall never, if I can help it, preach a sermon from which hope must be excluded. I do not despair, in the grand outcome, of any one. I look with prophecy of

good upon the very vilest. Over the darkest abyss of sin and suffering, I see a light from the throne of God. But my hope is based, not upon immunity from suffering which the legerdemain of vicarious sacrifice offers, but largely upon the very fact of suffering itself. Every man must reap the harvest of his own sowing. There is no escape. Upon that harvest no blight or mildew shall fall. No hired or voluntary substitute can thrust in for him the sickle. Every man shall bear his own burden. Every man shall expiate his own sins. Every man shall suffer for what he himself has done, and so long as he sins so long shall he suffer, whether in this world or the next. Character established by long and gradual processes, cannot be changed in the twinkling of an eye. Pain itself will be a consuming fire,—a fire kindled in love,—which will at last burn out the sin that feeds its flame.

(2) And this penalty does not wait. It begins at once. It goes on. It is here and now, no less than there and then.

The idea of a future general judgment at the destruction of this world, where accounts shall be settled once for all and all at once, must share with the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice the responsibility of fostering carelessness and procrastination. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts

of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Delay the reckoning and you increase the sinner's impunity. By every remove of the sentence does his forehead become more brazen. A recent writer says: "Notwithstanding many angry discussions about punishment, the Church has not yet come up to the true idea of retribution. Hell has been placed too far away to have any practical effect on life and conduct." We must wake to the fact that it is here and now, not only inevitable but present.

"They that are in sin," says Swedenborg, "are also in the punishment of sin."

> "The stern behests of duty,
> The doom-book open thrown,
> The heaven ye seek, the hell ye fear,
> Are with yourselves alone!"

II.—The Nature of Retribution.

What is the penalty, and how is it executed? If there is a rational use of fear, what are the real objects? Why should we fear sin?

1. We may read the penalty that is affixed to sin, first of all, *in deterioration of the moral, and often of the physical, nature.*

Every evil thought or deed has sentence against it speedily executed in the character. Our manhood and womanhood suffer loss. Sin blights and shrivels. One cannot do a mean thing or think a base thought without becoming like the thing he

thinks or does. The worm takes on the color of the leaf upon which it feeds. Every vile thought leaves its trail of slime behind, leaves the mind filthier for even its momentary presence. Every bad act of a man's life makes it easier for him evermore to do the bad. A miser, not only scrapes his fingers to the bone in raking together his money, he hardens his heart to the core. "What is put into the strong box," it is truly said, "is taken out of the man." He who cheats, is cheating himself worse than all others. The thief steals from himself; the liar turns himself into a living lie; the profligate is his own victim. The man who attempts to injure his neighbor, only succeeds in injuring himself. The wrong that he does his own soul is ten times more severe and lasting than any evil he can inflict! "No man," says Burke, "ever had a point of pride that was not injurious to him;" and St. Bernard wrote: "Nothing can work me damage except myself; the harm that I sustain I carry about with me, and never am a real sufferer but by my own fault."

(1) .We are sometimes blinded and confused by the fact that *we see no outward signs of penalty*, that those who do evil seem not to be moved by any pangs of suffering, and even prosper. While the processes of retribution go on continuously they do at length bring crises that reveal to the wrong-doer and to others the inevitable tendency

of even the smallest deviation from righteousness. In a passage from Ecclesiastes we have these remarkable words: "Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, * * it shall not be well with the wicked." The eyes of justice are not bandaged. Nothing has clearer or surer vision. If it were possible to realize the dream of the German poet, to conceive of this universe as having no God at its center, yet would it be impossible for men to escape judgment. The laws of our own being, soul and body,—the laws of the material universe,—would bring certain retribution to every one who violates them, though the Divine Judge be banished and his throne be torn from its foundation. If men will flatter themselves that they can escape God, let them know that they cannot escape nature. In cell of prison, in ward of hospital, in cage of asylum; in wrecked body and shattered brain; in ruined honor and blighted hopes; in exile from country, in loneliness and desolation of spirit, does Nature execute judgment for her broken statutes. Who runs in her debt will find the uttermost farthing exacted. The thought of Nature visiting through her laws the penalty of breaking them is vastly more impressive than, yea, more terrible than, the picture of Nature in convulsions, the sky a shriveled parchment, the earth reeling like a drunken giant!

Sow the wind, and you shall reap the whirlwind!

Sow your "wild oats" and you shall reap pollution!

(2) While retribution goes back of all outward prosperity, *the crisis does not always come in the cessation of that prosperity.* The blow does not necessarily fall in the destruction of the outward fabric, but in the fearful revelation of what has been going on within. We wake from our dreams of peace to find an armed host. We have indulged a wrong thought,—not very harmful we supposed,—we awake to find that it has grown into an evil passion. We indulged a little dislike; we wake to find it a full-grown hatred. We said a little something bitter and malicious now and then; we wake to find that the tongue of a scold, or fault-finder, or slanderer, is defiling our mouths! In the Indian fable a dwarf asked a king for as much land as he could cover in three steps. When the king gave the permission, the dwarf instantly became a giant who with one stride covered the land, with another the waters, and at the third knocked the king from his throne and took possession. How often do we wake to find that our dwarfs have sprung up into giants!

"You do not look as if you had prospered by your wickedness," said a gentleman to a notoriously wicked man. "I have not prospered at all," cried the man feelingly. "If I had given half the time and energy to some honest calling which I have spent in trying to get a living without work,

I might now be a man of property and character, instead of the homeless wretch I am." He then told his story, and ended by saying, "I have been twice in state-prison, I have made acquaintance with all sorts of miseries in my life, but I tell you my worst punishment *is in being what I am.*" No bolt direct from the hand of God could have added to his torture. The worst punishment of sin is to be the sinner!

2. Closely connected with all this moral deterioration *is the action of conscience* which forms a part of the penalty of transgression.

(1) When the revelation of what it has become is made to the soul, conscience emphasizes that revelation with the lash, drives it home with the sword. Conscience makes keen the sense of personal degradation with the feelings of grief, shame, remorse, anguish of spirit. Conscience makes havoc in the soul by raising vain regrets over lost opportunities and extinguished possibilities. Here is a fable I picked up that illustrates:

On the bank of a rivulet sat a little child. Her lap was filled with flowers. Her face was as radiant as the sunshine, and her voice as clear as that of the robin.

The stream went rippling on, while, with every gush of its music, the child lifted a flower and, laughing gayly, threw it upon the water. In her

glee, she forgot that her treasures were growing less; and, with the quick motion of childhood, she threw them one after another upon the sparkling tide, until every bud and blossom had disappeared. Then, seeing her loss, she sprang to her feet, and, weeping, called aloud to the stream, "Bring back my flowers!"

But the rivulet danced along, regardless of her sorrow. While it bore the blooming burden away, her words were sent back by a taunting echo along its reedy margin. And long after, amid the wailing of the breeze and the fitful bursts of childish grief, was heard the unavailing cry, "Bring back my flowers!"

Ye who are idly wasting the precious hours and opportunities of youth, see, in the thoughtless, impulsive child, an emblem of yourselves. All these are perfumed flowers. Let their fragrance be diffused in blessings all around thee, and ascend as sweet incense to their beneficent Giver.

Else, when ye have carelessly flung them all away, and see them receding upon the swift waters of time, ye will cry, in tones more sorrowful than those of the weeping child, "Bring back my flowers!" And the only answer will be an echo from the shadowy Past, "Bring back my flowers!"

(2) Conscience, too, forces upon the spirit the wrongs done to others, the suffering of innocent hearts, rights disregarded, feet led astray, the

fountains of happiness turned into springs of bitterness.

Memory is the servant of conscience. You have wronged some one. Banish the thought. Plunge into business or revelry. Away with the recollection. But in an hour when you think not, memory's wand will conjure up the specters of the past. You must look upon them again and again, here or hereafter, till the sight burns into your soul with fiercer flames than fire and brimstone. Why is it that fugitives from justice often give themselves up, but that the Nemesis of their crimes is continually at their heels, and there is no escape but in surrender?

> "But in these cases,
> We still have judgment here; that we but teach
> Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
> To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice
> Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
> To our own lips."

(3) Conscience punishes by often turning the wrong-doer into a *coward*, fearful of the disclosure of his guilt.

The story of Bessus is familiar in Plutarch, "that he killed his own father, and the murder lay concealed for a long time. At length being invited to supper among strangers, after he had so loosened a swallow's nest with his spear that it fell down, he killed all the young ones. Upon which, being asked by the guests that were present

what injury the swallows had done him that he should commit such an irregular act, 'Did you not hear,' said he, 'these cursed swallows, how they clamored and made a noise, false witnesses as they were, that I had long ago killed my father?'"

Have we not here an explanation of that Scriptural expression, "A fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation?"

Browning illustrates also, how conscience makes us afraid of all things. Two culprits hid in the forest. A storm arises, and one of them exclaims:

> "Buried in woods we lay, you recollect;
> Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
> And ever and anon some bright white shaft
> Burned thro' the pine-tree roof—here burned and there
> As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen
> Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture.
> Feeling for guilty thee and me!"

There is a conversation between two villains, in Richard III that may also serve as an illustration.

"*First.*—So when he opens his purse to give to us our reward, thy conscience flies out.

Second.—Let it go; there's few or none will entertain it.

First.—How if it come to thee again?

Second.—I'll not meddle with it. It is a dangerous thing. It makes a man a coward. A man cannot steal, but it accuseth him; he cannot swear, but it checks him; 'tis a blushing shame-faced

spirit that mutinies in a man's bosom; it fills one full of obstacles; it made me once restore a purse of gold that I found; it beggars any man that keeps it; it is turned out of all towns and cities for a dangerous thing.

First.—Zounds, it is even now at my elbow!"

(4) If you tell me that in many cases, the conscience is seared, and ceases to trouble, I reply that at times it may be silenced but never dethroned. It may desist from the rod, but only to prepare for more terrible strokes. Who can say that another man's conscience is dead? What do we know, in spite of his actions, what goes on in his breast? Who can say that his own conscience is dead? In the dream of Eugene Aram, the guilty man hides the corpse in a thick wood under a huge pile of leaves; but when he returns a mighty wind has swept the leaves away. He then plunges it into a dark stream, but when he comes back the stream is dry and the corpse is stark and ghastly at the bottom. It is just as impossible to put away one's conscience. Bury it. Pile upon it all the iniquity you please; heap indifference and scorn upon it. Seal the sepulcher with eternal disdain. Go your way. The troubler is buried. But in an hour when you think not, that sepulcher will be rent asunder, and the Great Avenger you thought was wrapped in the unbroken slumber of death, will spring forth to confront you.

The great masters who have read the human heart most thoroughly,—those who, by the consent of all ages, knew what was in man,—have laid heaviest stress upon the workings of conscience as an element of retribution.

Gervinus says of Shakespeare:—

"The deity in our bosoms Shakespeare has bestowed with intentional distinctness, even upon his most abandoned villains, and that too when they deny it. To nourish this spark and not to quench it, is the loud sermon of all his works."

In King Richard himself, we have one of the most striking instances that Shakespeare has given:—

"O coward conscience, how thou dost afflict me!
The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight:
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
I am a villain; yet I lie, I am not.
Fool, of thyself speak well; fool, do not flatter.
My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.
Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree;
Murder, stern murder, in the dir'st degree,
Thrown to the bar, crying all, Guilty, guilty!
I shall despair,—There is no creature loves me;
And if I die, no soul will pity me:—
Nay, wherefore should they,—since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself?
Methought the souls of all that I had murdered
Came to my tent; and every one did threat
To-morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard."

Charles Dickens also understood something about the human heart, and over and over has he depicted the Nemesis that, in the pangs of conscience, hunted down the evil-doer. In the case of the elder Rudge, he makes the culprit speak:—

"I that in the form of man live the life of a hunted beast; that in the body am a spirit, a ghost upon the earth, a thing from which all creatures shrink, save those curst beings of another world, who will not leave me; I am, in the desperation of this night, past all fear but that of the hell in which I exist from day to day."

No one will doubt that Lord Byron knew some phases of human life, and those too which would add most value to his testimony upon the very subject we were illustrating. He is constantly obtruding himself upon the reader,—himself or what he fancies himself,—and it may be that it is his own experience which he records in the following passage from one of his principal poems:

"The mind that broods o'er guilty woes
Is like the scorpion girt by fire;
In circle narrowing as it glows,
The flames around their captive close;
Till inly scorched by thousand throes,
And inly maddening in her ire,
One and sole relief she knows,—
The sting she nourished for her foes,
Whose venom never yet was vain,
Gives but one pang, and cures all pain,
She darts into her desperate brain.

So do the dark in soul expire,
Or live like scorpion girt by fire;
So writhes the mind remorse hath riven,
Unfit for earth, undoomed for heaven;
Darkness above, despair beneath,
Around it flame, within it death."

III. WHAT IS THE PRACTICAL THOUGHT OF THIS DISCOURSE?

It is this: "Now is the accepted time and now is the day of salvation."

If we sin, we must suffer: The longer we go on in sin, the longer shall we be miserable, the more of life and joy and usefulness we shall lose! Whatever may be the outcome, this much is certain: Opportunities are flying past us every day that never will come to us again! Every moment that is wasted takes away from the sum total of our possibilities. Every sin that we commit makes it more easy to continue in sin and more difficult to turn to righteousness. The longer we do wrong, the more intense is the suffering we prepare. All our bitter and malicious and impure thoughts are but storing with thunder the clouds that shall some day break with fury upon our heads. The deeper we go down, the longer and more difficult shall we find the pathway that leads upward to the heaven of purity and peace! And though I believe that the pathway will never be impossible,—though I believe that the Divine Love and Patience will never be exhausted,—yet it seems a folly and ab-

surdity for any soul deliberately to choose that road to heaven which winds through all the horrors of hell, the mire of moral degradation, the flames of conscience!

To-day is the accepted time. This is the moment for starting in the pathway of righteousness,—a pathway in which we have so glorious a leader. I do not preach to you Christ as very God—not as the second person in the Trinity,—not as a sacrifice to appease the Almighty; but as our elder and greater Brother, in whom the Divine life of the Father was most fully manifested; our Teacher, Leader and Inspiration. I commend to you his spirit and his principles,—a love like his in the heart; a life like his in the world. This is the road from hell to heaven.

IX.

THE DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

[Sunday Evening, October 26, 1890.]

"For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."—PSALM 51: 16, 17.

Last Sunday evening I spoke upon the subject of Penalty, endeavoring to show by what laws human transgressions are visited with divine justice. I trust that if any were present who thought that, in this church, we do not believe in suffering for sin, they were then undeceived. Surely I gave them an opportunity of learning the truth upon that subject. No church holds more strenuously to the belief that every transgression and disobedience shall receive a just recompense of reward,—that "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

To-night we take up the other half of the theme, the Divine Forgiveness. Our song shall be of "Judgment and Mercy."

The cry of the soul in all generations has been, "Blot out my transgressions and remember mine iniquities no more." In the old legend the organ sunk in the sea still sent its plaintive music over

the billows and through the storms. Humanity, sunk in wretchedness and guilt, lifts its prayer for pardon over every wave of sorrow, and makes it heard through every tempest of life. All this indicates some real need in the human heart and demands some real comfort. It calls for an assurance that the Great Being behind us and above us is wise and loving; that he will make an end of sin and pain; that he will change the cry for mercy into a song of peace.

I. Although there is a genuine necessity for such assurance, many superstitious notions are still entertained about the idea of God's forgiveness. There is clay with the gold.

It is a mistake to suppose that God is altogether such an one as we are. He is not a magnified man. We, indeed, interpret him through our higher nature, through our best and purest affections and aspirations; but the trouble is that men have always attributed to him the lower rather than the higher elements. They have thought him capable of hatred and vengeance. They have attached to him their baser passions as well as their virtues. Even in Judaism, in its early stages, God is represented as having all the savagery of primitive man. He delights to exercise brute force. He disports himself in cruelties. He orders most shocking barbarities. He perpetrates crimes that fill us with horror, since Jesus prayed for his mur-

derers. The mistake was natural enough, but it *was* a mistake. When a certain painter set up his masterpiece in the market-place, inviting the people to criticise, and to mark with a brush the features that they deemed capable of improvement, he found at the close of the day that his beautiful picture was covered and besmirched with blotches of paint. So do men take the brush, dip it into the mud and slime and ichor of their own bad passions, and daub the fairest conceptions of God, the benignant face of the Eternal.

"Not mine to look where cherubim
And seraph may not see;
But nothing can be good in him
That evil is in me.

"The wrong that pains my Lord below
I dare not throne above;
I know not of his hate, I know
His goodness and his love."

It follows, therefore, that there are certain differences between divine and human forgiveness. When a man truly forgives his brother, what does he do?

(1) He withholds the infliction of any penalty. He forbears vengeance. He does not meet evil with evil, sword with sword, fire with fire. He says, "I will not strike the blow to which I am prompted; go in peace." But the divine forgiveness does not set aside guilt or remove penalty. It will always be true that we have sinned. No power can make that otherwise. No power can wipe out the guilt that attaches or the suffering

that follows. Absolute justice will be done. We ought not to wish it otherwise. We ought not to wish justice defeated or law reversed.

(2) What else does the man do who forgives his brother? He roots out of his heart all wrong feelings, all those sentiments out of which actual vengeance springs. He not only says, "I will strike no blow," but he also says, "I will cherish no malignant or bitter spirit." He scatters the clouds before the bolt descends. But there is no anger in God such as rages in the breasts of men. We speak only by accommodation when we say that God is angry. His opinion of sin, his displeasure with wrong-doing, is expressed in his laws, and in the consequences that follow their violation, but he does not fly into a fury when some one goes astray. He does not fume and rage as men do.

(3) When a man forgives his brother he restores, so far as possible, the broken relationship. He binds together the severed ties. He opens his arms and says to the offender, "Return; it shall be as if no chasm had ever yawned between us. I shall feel and act toward you as of old." But so far as God is concerned there is no broken relationship to be restored. He does not need to be reconciled to us; but we who have gone astray, to him. The work of Christ was not to reconcile God to man, but man to God. It is significant

that the word "atonement" is used in the King James version of the New Testament but once, and in the Revision not at all. The word "reconciliation" is substituted.

This word gives the key-note to the entire mission of Jesus Christ. His was a work of "reconciliation." He came to break down the barriers between man and God, and between man and his brother. The atonement was not upon Calvary, but in the human heart. That was to be reconciled to a life of righteousness. This idea is kept constantly before us in the New Testament. "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life"—that is, by leading such a life as his. Such a life is salvation. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,"—not himself unto the world. "He is our peace who hath made both one,"—speaking of Jews and Gentiles—"and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." "That he might reconcile both unto God in one body, by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby"—the enmity existing between Jews and Gentiles, and between both and God.

This was the central thought,—this was the idea underlying the entire work. The mission of Jesus looked manward rather than Godward. There was no flaming Deity to propitiate; no wrath to

be quenched in blood. But there were human hearts to be turned from sin to righteousness. Wanderers were to be led to the way from which they had strayed, prodigals were to be brought back to the homes they had deserted, lost sheep in the wilderness were to be found and borne to the fold. This was his mission. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." I will draw them from their sins into a life like mine, to a life in harmony with the will of God.

II. We may now say, in general, that the Divine Forgiveness is the expression, in ten thousand ways, of those feelings of goodness and mercy on the part of God which seek, *not the remisson of penalty, but the restoration of the transgressor.*

Let us carry out this idea in some of its details.

1. Forgiveness is not the cessation of God's wrath, which never began, which demanded no sacrifice of the blood of his best beloved Son before he could look with compassion upon the rest of his children; but it is the removal of those things in human character and conduct which make men look for wrath and expect it. We look upon the moon at night and sometimes see a dusky red shadow creeping across its shining face. What is

the matter? Is the moon becoming dark? Not so. The earth has gotten between the sun and the moon, and it is the shadow of the earth that is cast upon the fair countenance of the evening planet. Men think sometimes that they behold darkness upon the radiant brow of our Father in heaven. But it is not so. The frown of God is the shadow of human guilt. Remove the evil from man's heart, and he will no longer fancy that there is disturbance in the skies.

2. Forgiveness is not the rescinding of punishment; it is deliverance from sin. Penalty itself is administered in love. It is one of those forces by which we are finally purified.

It has been well said: "Zeal and repentance are the peculiar exercises of the heart that should flow from the knowledge that God chastens in love. Who does not see that this view of God and his government is alone calculated to produce a pure and wholesome zeal in the service of God? Go, look at the cringing slave who is driven to the performance of his task with the lash, and is there any zeal there in the service of the master? Servile obedience there may be; but pure zeal is not the offspring of such causes as these. So of repentance: it is a willing and heartfelt turning from sin, and ought never to be confounded with the forced and outward obedience of the slave. The man who steals and is detected and punished with the

rigor of the law may be sorry that he stole; but his sorrow will proceed from his dread of punishment, and not from hatred of the crime itself But when a man feels that the punishment proceeds from the love of a friend, then he sees in the fact that he is punished the truth that sin itself is a deadly and bitter thing from which his friend would save him; and he loathes the sin itself; and turns from it with a full purpose of heart. Wrath may freeze the soul and cause it to cower down afraid. It may even restrain and deter from outbreaking sin, but it can never touch the heart."

3. Forgiveness is not the restoration of a lost relationship, but the assurance that the relationship never was broken on the part of God.

What an expression is this: "God who loved us when we were dead in sins!" The most difficult thing of all is to realize this love, a love that is older than the hills and new as the last sunbeam that kissed them.

"Even in our sins:" is that impossible? Are there any analogies in human life?

Here is a young man whose parents are poor; but they are determined that he shall have an education. They toil and save, they deny themselves even the necessities of life that he may be sent to college. What hopes they build upon him! What rosy visions of his future rise before him! His success will more than repay them for

all their self-denial. So they toil on, their hands growing harder, the lines in their faces deeper. They toil on, the meals upon their table becoming scantier, that more of their little earnings may be sent to him. By and by they are plunged into thick darkness. The boy of their pride, the son of their hopes, comes home disgraced, dismissed from college. With slow, humiliated step, with shame upon his downcast face, he comes up the pathway to the old house, down which he had walked so proudly a year before! What reception will he meet? Will the door be closed? Will he be turned away? No more than the prodigal was turned away when he came back from the swine-fields! Sorrowing hearts, but still loving ones, await him. They cling to him, they bring him to repentance, they intercede for him, they plead that he may have another chance.

It is related by George Dawson that a painter named Romney, a Kendal man, in his youth, with the consent of his wife, went up to London to seek his fortune. When he got there, without any wrong intention at first, it happened that he did not say anything about being married. By degrees that man got on; he became rich and fashionable, was courted as a great painter, and lived in Cavendish square or some aristocratic region of that kind. For forty years that man lived in London, and during that forty years he

never went back to Kendal once, nor did his wife see him. During the first years traveling was not easy, and there was an excuse for him; but by and by when the means came, the will was gone. He never went back once; he never wrote to that faithful woman once; he never saw her once. O Prodigal! He had no thought for the fond heart and the true soul at home. Surely he was the meanest of men! At the end of forty years, sickness came; the body failed; madness overtook him and then, broken in body, diseased in brain, stricken, smitten, driven home by calamity, and not by penitence, back went the wretch to his wife. And what did the woman do? Did she shut the door and say, "Too late?" She might have used these words, and who could have blamed her? But not she.

She took the man in. She waited on his dying hours; she nursed him tenderly; she watched the fast-ebbing brain; she closed his dying eyes; she laid him in his grave; she did all this, and gave him no word of reproach. In the history of man's meanness there is no meaner chapter. In the history of woman's glory there is no more glorious page. Has not He who has put such power of forgiveness into a human heart everything to attract us in himself?

Our Father in heaven, art thou worse than thy children? "God who loved us even when we were dead in sins."

And in a thousand ways that love is manifested, It sets before us ideals of character, and inspires to strive for their realization. It aims to touch our hearts by the unnumbered blessings of every day. It constantly appeals to our higher nature.

"The forgiveness of God," says J. Vila Blake, "is a pursuing love, never tired, never uncertain, unsteadfast, backward or unresolved, always perfect, present, unswerved. Look at all things. See how pityingly events are ordered for our weakness; how they stoop to us when we fall; how tenderly the order of God takes up his children and leads them; how the flowers spring up before and behind, and love shines on the path. What helps, what incitements, invitations! What warnings, admonitions, exhortations! How our wanderings are followed by calls and penalties inward and outward, till we turn again to the light which never was turned from us! Look at these things till we know the forgiveness of God, the eternal forgiveness, and learn that never his face was averted, but ours was turned away."

There is a story in Lamertine of a nest full of young birds, whose supporting tree was torn away by an angry torrent and swept down the mad stream. The mother bird flew along beside the rushing waves that were bearing her nestlings to destruction, crying after them in plaintive, piteous notes, until at a bend in the stream, the tree be-

came lodged, and she darted into the nest to find her young birds safe. So does the voice of the divine love pursue all who are carried along on the swift stream of life.

This is our conception of the Divine Forgiveness.

When the forgiveness of God overtakes us, it imparts a forgiving spirit to us. This is the test that we have become reconciled to him, that we are reconciled to our brother also. We lose the desire to take our fellows by the throat, saying, "Pay me what thou owest!" When we feel that we are forgiven, we are ready to forgive.

This evening closes the series of sermons I began some weeks ago. I am not given, as you all know, to over-much exhortation; but the subject of this evening concerns us all. It is for us to respond to the touch of the divine hand. It is for us to open our hearts that we may receive the transforming influence. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." A poor woman whose only daughter had wandered from her home, went to Dr. Bernardo, the worker among the London slums, and asked his help to find and restore her. He asked for a photograph of the girl, had several copies made, wrote upon each the words, "Come home," and placed them where they would be most likely to meet the eyes of the erring child. She would know by those words

that she was still loved, and that forgiveness was awaiting her. You know that there are many of the old watch-words of religion that I cannot utter; many of the old ideas that I do no believe. But it is with all sincerity that I say to-night to any who may have strayed from paths of righteousness, the voice of God is calling after you in all your wanderings, "Come home; O come home,"—home to your forsaken allegiance, home to your neglected duties, home to purity and peace and faith and love!

X.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

[Sunday Evening, April 23, 1893.]

"Thou treasurest up for thyself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works." —ROM. 2: 5, 6.

The ideas of judgment that have, for a long time, held sway, and that even yet linger in many minds, may be summed up in this wise: The day is approaching (some say that it is near, and some that it is yet remote in the future) when the sound of the great trumpet shall break upon the ears of a startled world, and when the terrified nations lift their eyes upward they shall behold the returning form of Christ. Angels will be his heralds and clouds his chariot. The blast of that trumpet will pierce the "dull, cold ear of death;" and those who have slept for ages in the earth will find their bodies miraculously restored. Soul and body will be united, and the entire man, as he was in the days of the flesh, will come forth from the tomb. The King will set up his throne, and those who are raised from the dead, as well as those who are alive at his coming, must stand before that throne to receive their final award or sentence. The right-

eous will return with him to the skies and enter into life; the wicked will be sentenced to unending destruction. Thus closes the great drama of human history, and the world, the stage upon which it was enacted, will be reduced to ashes.

1. This was the old conception of judgment. While it still lingers, it does not, for various reasons, hold over human thought its original sway.

(1) First, men began to doubt whether the decisions of that day—supposing it to come in the form and manner described—were to be absolutely final. They began to doubt that, in the case of wicked persons, there was never to be another opportunity for repentance. This doubt has grown, has indeed become transformed into a belief in the possibility of restoration,—a belief that in the minds of multitudes of Christians in all denominations, now holds an important place.

(2) Then, too, when men began to question the finality of the decision, it was not long before they began to ask whether there was to be a *future* judgment at all,—whether there was any sense in which sentence against an evil work, under the Divine administration, could be said to be delayed. They studied more closely those laws of retribution that are ceaselessly in process of execution, and saw that *here and now* was judgment taking place.

(3) The wonder arose also, why it was necessary to dig from the grave the old body that had been mouldering for ages after the soul had taken its departure. So with the vanishing of the notion of a future judgment, the idea of a bodily resurrection has also been gradually fading. Perhaps the strong improbability,—even the absurdity,—of such a resurrection, did much to obliterate the belief of a future judgment.

2. On the other hand, while it is true that judgment is going on forever, that every day is a day of reckoning, that no sin is committed which is not instantly avenged, yet there are certain parables and expressions of Jesus that certainly seem to indicate something more. I do not mean to intimate that he even remotely taught such a future general judgment as that I have described; but that *the silent and ceaseless processes of retribution bring crises in the histories of nations and the lives of individuals*; there are times when the seeds of iniquity produce harvests. There are times when the wheat and the tares growing together through the entire season in one field are separated and the tares gathered into bundles and burned. There are times when the goats and the sheep that for many days have fed undisturbed upon the same pasture are divided, the goats upon the left hand, the sheep upon the right. There are times when the fish in the seas, good and bad playing in com-

mon waters, are drawn out in the fisher's net and sorted,—the good being placed in vessels for use, the bad thrown away. In such passages it is taught that while judgment goes on forever, there are times when it reaches its culmination.

3. The text I have selected from Paul contains and expresses both ideas. He says to the wicked: You are treasuring up wrath by every sin that you commit, unto the day of wrath. You may not be aware of it now. You may think that your transgressions will bear no evil fruit; that they will leave no marks upon your characters; but the day is coming when the results of what is now going on will be revealed. A crisis is certain. That crisis will be a day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God,—a day when you will realize what has been going on through years of iniquity,—when you will know by the strong and sudden agony, that the avenging angel never missed a retributive stroke!

In this text we find the harmony of both conceptions. There is judgment now and always. It is not understood. Men do not at first see the consequences of their acts, but crises come in life which bring the revelation or manifestation of that which is forever going forward. Here we find also the meaning of that phrase so constantly recurring which, in the old version is translated, "End of the world," but in the new, "End of the

age." It means the rounding up of a period of time, the completion of an epoch in the career of a nation or an individual. It does not contain the idea of absolute finality. It is the close of any season which has been required for the germs of good or evil to unfold themselves.

I. LET US FIRST OF ALL CONSIDER THE LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE THAT HAS GIVEN RISE TO THE OLD VIEWS CONCERNING JUDGMENT.

1. If we are to understand the language of either the New Testament or the Old, we must transport ourselves back to the time in which they were written.

We must know something about the country, the face of nature, and even the climate. These are all sources of imagery. We must acquaint ourselves with the customs, the habits of thought of the people. We must know something about the forces at work to shape the national life. We must put ourselves just as far as possible where the writers stood, think as they thought, see as they saw, express ourselves as they did. We must understand the sources of their imagery. The great difficulty with all our interpretations of Scripture is, that we have neglected this simple principle, and have conceived of these writers as speaking according to modern methods and in modern terms. We have subjected them to the rules of to-day, have applied to them the canons

of the Occident; and hence, while our systems have been more or less logical, they have at the same time been unreal and artificial. We might just as well clothe those men in the costumes of today, as demand that their language be tested by rules of speech we have brought out for a state of society and schools of thought so thoroughly unlike. In Christ's teachings concerning judgment, he uses the language that the prophets of the nation before him had employed. The drapery of all his instruction is simply that which he found ready made,—that with which many centuries had familiarized the popular mind. He spoke to the people in terms they could readily understand, terms that through all the past had been charged with similar messages.

2. How did the prophets form their vocabulary? What elements entered into the image of their preaching? Particularly from what sources were their ideas of retribution and judgment derived?

(1) From conceptions of the universe very different from ours.

In remote ages there was no such thing as we understand by exact science. People regarded the earth as flat, as having foundations under it, as raised upon pillars. When an earthquake occurred, they said, the pillars of the earth are shaken, and they supposed that God had shaken them in his wrath. They conceived of the firmament as solid, the stars

fastened to it. When a shower of meteors occurred they said the stars were falling like the leaves of autumn, and they were filled with fear. When an eclipse covered the face of the sun, it seemed to them like the frown of Jehovah. The sun was turned into darkness. When the shadow crept over the moon, its dusky red suggested to them that the moon had been turned into blood. Through all these natural phenomena, they imagined God's displeasure expressing itself. And so many people, in later centuries, have supposed that they must look for a day when the sun will be literally blotted out, the moon turned to blood, the stars go aimlessly crashing through space and the physical globe be destroyed.

(2) There are other sources of imagery from which the prophets drew,—notably the customs of their monarchs.

Hence came the heralds, their chariots, their trumpets. When the people of a city were to be gathered, an alarm was sounded upon a trumpet. When a hostile army approached, the voice of the trumpet was lifted up beneath the walls calling upon the people to surrender or warning them that siege would be laid to their city. So the trumpet became to them a symbol of judgment. They took that trumpet and put it into the hands of Jehovah, and when they spoke of judgment as about to fall upon a city, they spoke of God as

coming with the sound of a trumpet. Their natural imagery and their royal imagery were used in the same passages and for the same purpose. Thus were prepared the molds into which all their thoughts upon these subjects was cast. The molds survived and were used in the time of Christ as well as in the time of the prophets; but none of this symbolism was ever used to signify the actual destruction of the physical universe.

3. Examples of these figures are found upon almost every page of the prophets. When Isaiah predicts calamity for Babylon, he declares that "the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine." He represents God as saying, "Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger." In describing the earlier destruction of Jerusalem, the prophet says: "The foundations of the earth do shake, * * the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed." Judgment upon Idumea is thus set forth: "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling leaf from the fig-tree." The prophet Joel, in denouncing a plague of locusts upon Palestine,

exclaims:—"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand,—a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness. * * There hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. * * The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble; the sun and moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. * * The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." Zechariah, speaking of another calamity says: "The Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with the whirlwinds of the south."

These passages are sufficient to show us how the imagery that is found in the New Testament when Christ speaks of judgment, is the common property of the Jewish prophets. In no case does it refer to an absolute destruction of the physical universe. It was, indeed, originally drawn from natural phenomena in which the wrath of Jehovah was supposed to be manifested; and so at last came to be used whenever that wrath was spoken of—without reference to derivation. In like manner, the rhetoric suggested by royalty and applied to Jehovah and his dealings with men, remained after its original associations had been far

removed into the background. So the "great trumpet," said to announce the coming of the Lord to judgment, was in the messages of warning, —although the prophet, in later days, might not have connected it with the progress of a monarch or the approach of a devastating army.

Let us now open the New Testament to one or two passages in which Christ uses similar language. On a certain day as he and his disciples stood upon the slopes of Olivet, looking upon the temple and the beautiful city, he told them that there should not remain one stone upon another that should not be thrown down. When they asked Him what should be the sign of that coming to judgment and of the end of the age, he replied: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. * * And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." What reason is there for giving these words in the mouth of Christ a different interpretation from that which they must have in the mouth of the prophets? The language is the same. It is the common description of the judgment. Many people think

that they find here a prediction of the destruction of the world as well as of Jerusalem. There is no reason, however, for believing that more than one event is intended. Nor is there any stronger reason for believing that the dissolution of the world is predicted in that other passage where he speaks of the Son of Man coming with the holy angels to gather the nations before him for judgment. As in the one case it was a special crisis in the history of Jerusalem that he meant, so in this case he is giving a general assurance that there are crises in the history of all nations and in the lives of all individuals. Those crises are brought about by injustice in the one and by selfishness in the other. To this principle we may refer all his other parables which speak of the end of the age and the coming of the Judge. There will be a rounding up, a completion, an epoch that culminates in retribution. The stream of iniquity comes at last to a precipice over which it inevitably falls; a fiery harvest awaits every sowing of tares. Thoughtlessly, unconsciously, men and nations, without suffering apparent detriment for a long time, may treasure up wrath against the day of wrath; but the revelation of God's righteous judgment is sure to come! They that sow to the flesh shall finally of the flesh reap corruption; they that sow to the wind shall reap the whirlwind!

II. THIS IS THE PRINCIPLE UPON WHICH THE

WORDS CONCERNING JUDGMENT ARE TO BE INTERPRETED. LET US NOW MAKE THE APPLICATION.

We shall not be obliged to go very far to find it. Instances abound.

1. *We shall find it in the history of nations.* We saw it a quarter of a century ago in our own country. For years the injustice of slavery had been practiced. Men thought it was profitable. They grew rich and prosperous upon the product of unpaid toil. It was thought to be an essential factor of national life. Grave divines in the pulpit graced it with texts. It was defended by statesmen in the halls of legislation. They did not perceive its baleful effects upon the society in which it was practiced. But judgment was constantly, going on. The silent laws of nature were recording themselves with infallible precision At last the crisis came. The civil war was a revelation of the judgment of God against the evils which for more than a century had been treasuring up wrath. The sign of the Judge at last appeared in the heavens. The angels of destruction went forth. In that whirling and tossing midnight the sun was turned into darkness.

The same thing happened in France a hundred years ago. Priests and princes, for centuries, had kept the common people in ignorance, had trodden them under heels of iron. The laws of retri-

bution were at work. They did not manifest themselves for a long time; but in that terrific carnival of blood and fire, known as the French Revolution, there was a revelation of the righteous judgment of God. The moon was turned into blood.

The same principle will be applied in the case of Russia some day. It is working itself out. The throne is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. In banishing the brains, and trampling upon the muscles of the people, in driving out and oppressing the Jews,—the storm is gathering that must one day fall. The time will come when the words of the prophet will be applied to Russia as they were to Babylon and Edom: The sun shall be turned into darkness, the moon into blood. The stars shall fall from heaven and the very pillars of the earth shall be shaken. Judgment may be delayed; but the chariot of the Judge will come.

"In dream I saw a despot throned; and lo!
Beneath his throne there grew a grievous pit
That, yawning slowly, 'gan engulfing it;
All trembling then the sceptered imp cried, 'Ho!
Give help!' An army flew and from that woe
Redeeming, set him on a marble plain;
But see, the marble yields! Their help was vain;
He sinks and 'vengeful floods around him flow;
Then up an Alp they bear him, plant him high
And boast, 'Thy throne this granite will uphold
And make thee king, companion of the sky,

Making thy splendors with the morning's gold.'
The crag's a crater's throat while yet they cry,
And the stern fates their lawful prey enfold."

2. *We carry this principle into the life of the individual.*

A man may sin for years undetected, free from penalty, it seems, but the processes of retribution going on quietly in the soul will assuredly bring the day of judgment in that man's life. Insecure foundations and dishonest work upon a house will finally cause its downfall. The sting of tiny insects in a tree may pass unnoticed for a summer, but when the sunshine calls for the leaves again, the tree will be dead. It is so in any man's character and career.

For a long time Tweed and his ring ruled iniquitously in New York City. Men envied them. Those who had to toil for their daily bread, who were condemned to lives of poverty, looking upon them said: "There is no such thing as justice. These men are utterly corrupt. They steal, swindle and squander; but see how prosperous they are! No judgment hangs over them. It is false to say that men can not sin and be happy!" And yet, judgment was going on, tho' the outward eye saw it not. Tweed and his companions were sowing sin and they reaped retribution; they were sowing fire and brimstone and hell was their harvest,—the hell of downfall, prison, exile, death!

The judgment that was going perpetually on was at last revealed. David says: "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree; but he passed away, and lo! he was not—yea, I sought him but he could not be found."

But we need not seek remote examples. Is not the application of this truth seen by incidents that come to light every day? Men who have lived dishonorably for years, suddenly find that they have been treasuring up wrath against a day of wrath. Their secret iniquities, which they supposed would never come to light, have suddenly been revealed in the righteous judgment of God. A flash of avenging lightning has suddenly cleft the darkness that shrouded the life of sin. It is so with any evil habit. Sow the deed and you reap the habit; sow the habit, and you reap the character. Trifle with conscience, and you are but whetting the sword for the final plunge. Treat your minor sins, as you may call them, thoughtlessly or with levity; but they are crystalizing into settled iniquity. The laws of retribution go on, and before you know it, you are bound hand and foot by that which you would have looked upon with loathing at first.

A young man who, when he came to the city from the home of his childhood, would have scorned and loathed and detested associates whom

he could not introduce to his mother or sisters, allows himself to be drawn little by little into their society,—becomes gradually accustomed to foul words which issue like pestilence from their polluted lips,—accustomed to fouler deeds, until finally the revelation comes to him, "The whole course of my life has been changed! The things that once I hated now I love!" How have the stars been falling from his heaven; how have the foundations of the earth been shaken!

Another one allows himself to be drawn into a saloon—just for good fellowship. He takes his glass with the rest. He soon goes in again and takes another. The tendency strengthens. By and by he has to be helped home to his lodgings. He tumbles undressed upon his bed, and sleeps for the first time the sleep of the stupidly drunken. When consciousness begins to dawn, the morning has long been looking in at his window. When he wakes enough to recall the debauch of the night—he might well exclaim in the agony of that awful revelation—the revelation of what has really been going on for weeks and months: "My sun has been turned into darkness, my fair moon drips blood and the stars of my glory have dropped from the sky!"

Another one allows himself to play for money—"just enough to make the game interesting!" At last he seeks the cage of the "tiger" night after

night; loses, takes money from his employer—expecting to win and pay it back again—loses, takes more. At last discovery, arrest, disgrace, the penitentiary! For all such lives the symbols of judgment used by the prophets of old may forcibly describe their doom and downfall.

Let us heed the lesson. Judgment goes on forever, but there are crises of judgment as well. There is a DAY OF JUDGMENT! It may be put off, but it will come! I do not try to frighten you with the future world. I have no horrors of the pit wherewith to move you. But the present, the present! It is to-day that we must heed, if we would not fear to-morrow. Forsake now—this moment—the sin, the crookedness, the evil habit, the secret iniquity. There is no refuge from the doom of to-morrow but the repentance of to-day. Seek all that is noble. Seek the good. Seek every influence that will lift up and strengthen! Seek the inspiration of that wonderful life which triumphed over temptation—that life which shows what is possible for you and for me! The same God will help; the same hope is before us. There are many voices that once spoke, but now are silent. But there is one voice whose words come to us to-day like the sound of a bugle on the air of the centuries; a sound that floats over the graves of the mighty and the wrecks of empires, filling the hearts of the tempted and tried: "Be of good cheer. I have OVERCOME the world!"

XI.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

[Sunday Evening, April 12, 1893.]

"And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come."—MATT. 12:32.

The subject of the unpardonable sin keeps coming up ever and anon, sometimes in one shape and sometimes in another; now in the fervid appeal of a revivalist, again in the solemn title of a tract, or the sober heading of a review; anon in the triumphant shout of a preacher who fancies that here at least he has an argument against the final salvation of all, that here is a mountain-peak over which the ocean of infinite love shall never prevail. This is the last refuge of those who cling to the old theology on the subject of destiny. In this fortress they make their final stand.

I have a reason for this present discussion. This subject is sometimes pressed upon our attention by the unhinging of an intellect or the settled melancholy of a sensitive heart. A note was handed up in this pulpit, not long ago, from some one evidently sincere and evidently in great

trouble, asking for light upon the theme before us. When I say that the paper upon which that note was written was heavily bordered with black, you will understand that the request was probably born of a personal bereavement; that the writer may have been trembling for the fate of some one who had passed to the other world under the supposed shadow of this awful imprecation. I trust, therefore, that those who do not need my words will kindly believe that they are not superfluous. While this discourse may seem to some like applying the flail anew to chaff that has been already well threshed, there are others who will be glad of any grains of comfort the process may reveal.

Let it be conceded at once that the subject has its difficulties. It is not an easy one. If I fail in my explanation, I shall fail in good company. I shall not stand a solitary monument of exegetical disaster. Let me premise, however, that what is told us of this sin, which stands apparently exceptional in the realm of transgression, ought to be interpreted in the light of the universal promises and world-wide hope of the gospel. Whatever may be meant, however desperate the depravity described, however severe the penalty threatened, let us be sure that it does not mean to map out a small territory which the divine compassion can never conquer, for "all things shall be subdued unto Him." It cannot mean that there shall be

some subjects so rebellious that they will never yield; for "every knee shall bow of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth." It cannot mean that some voices will be finally silent in the grand ascription of praise; for "every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and in the sea, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth upon the throne, be the blessing and the honor and the glory and the dominion."

If you walk out into the woods in the early spring, you will often find upon the north side of the trees and in secluded places little patches of snow and ice. Everywhere else the traces of winter are melting away and running in tiny streams to the brooks and from the brooks into the Mississippi. You say, "Well, the sun's work is not all done yet; he will have a hard task to get around all these trees and into all these crevices, and he may not be able to shine upon some of this snow and ice powerfully enough to affect it." But do not fear for the sun. Come out again in a week or two. Where are now your stubborn and incorrigible relics of December? The sun has found them and the great stream is bearing their little tribute on its mighty tide to the gulf. You must learn to interpret nature in the light of summer. You must interpret the vestiges of winter that you see in the early spring by the undisputed

power of the sun. So must we interpret the exceptionally persistent cases of iniquity that we find mentioned in Scripture, in the light of its reiterated, emphatic and sweeping assertions of the omnipotence of divine love. That sun will at last melt the most frozen heart.

1. There are three versions of the incident from which the phrase "unpardonable sin" is drawn. These differ widely in detail. The account in Luke is wholly different from that in Matthew and Mark.

While these failures to agree upon circumstances of time and place discredit the infallibility of the memories of those who wrote, the accounts give evidence that some such words as those which stand at the head of this discourse were spoken by Jesus, and made a terribly distinct impression.

In two instances, however, the threatened withholding of forgiveness is represented as being occasioned by a slanderous assault of the Pharisees upon the character of the work of Jesus. We may, therefore, assume that this was its actual origin, although the tradition which Luke followed locates it in another connection.

The controversy arose over a case of exorcism. We are familiar with the demonology of that day, and know how every disease was attributed to an evil spirit, and how insanity, in particular, was regarded as demoniacal possession. Jesus, in per-

forming his cures, did not correct the popular belief, but proceeded upon it in restoring disordered intellects. We do not believe to-day nor is it necessary to suppose that he believed, in the existence of a huge arch-fiend who had legions of inferior demons under his command, sending them hither and thither on missions malign. The casting out of a devil would be, in modern phrase, the restoration of a lunatic to sanity. Whatever the malady, whatever the cure, it matters not. The Pharisees attributed his work to one whom they believed to be the source of all evil. They called light darkness. They confounded moral distinctions. They stigmatized holiness as iniquity. They attributed the good which Jesus accomplished through the power of God to deception and fraud, corruption and villiany. They believed that there was a monstrous personality of fiendishness, cruelty and depravity in the universe, and they were willing to taint and discredit with his unhallowed and polluting touch that which had been wrought and sanctified by the hand of Jehovah. Surely the brazen impudence of their folly and wickedness could go no further. Is it any wonder that Jesus set his blistering condemnation upon their shameless foreheads? The sin itself, therefore, was a sin against light, "falsity, willing sophistry, perversity of judgment about moral distinctions, the confounding of right and wrong, deeming good evil and evil good."

Let us now examine the phraseology in which Jesus pronounces upon this sin. In Matthew the expression is, "It shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in that which is to come." If we turn to the revision, instead of *world*, we have the term *age* in the margin; so that the expression ought to read, "Neither in this age nor in that which is to come." This translation gives the exact equivalent of the Greek. World, as we understand it, in the sense of place, is not intended. It does not mean the place in which we are living now, and that in which we shall live hereafter. It is a time word and not a term of locality. Let me cite the comment of Farrar upon this passage: "Our Lord only says that there is one particular sin * * * which is so heinous as not to be pardonable either in this (the Jewish) or the coming (the Christian) dispensation. Nothing, therefore, is of necessity implied respecting the world beyond the grave." Thus comments Farrar. I beg of you to notice this important conclusion of so able a scholar. He does not even admit that the words have reference to another life. They refer to this life, to some period of time that sweeps over men in the flesh. The force of the malediction is simply this: He who, under any dispensation or in any age, shuts his eyes to the light of that age, denying that there is light, blaspheming the influences at work for righteousness, opposing

the good as if it were evil,—such an one cuts himself off from the joy and peace that might fill his soul, forfeits the advantages of progress, blights his character, and hardens his heart; and that, not by any divine intervention, but by the action of inevitable laws. He hauls his boat up high and dry upon the shore, while the tides of the divine spirit sweep past. "This is the condemnation—light has come into the world and men prefer darkness."

Let us consider the form of the malediction in Mark. "He is in danger of eternal damnation." The revision renders this clause, "is guilty of an eternal sin." If we preserve the force of *eternal*, which is really the adjective of the word *age* in Matthew, we have, "is guilty of a sin pertaining to the age," or "is guilty of an age-long sin." Thus by the help of the revised scriptures, we get the two important terms in the language of Jesus reduced to *age* and *age-long*. These terms mean an indefinite period and never absolute endlessness. Thus the sin, however deadly, however long lasting in its effects upon the soul, is at once taken from the region of unending darkness and despair, and brought into a realm where God's forgiving mercy may some day reach it. Even if we should admit, as Farrar does not, that the obstinacy with which the soul resists truth is extended into the world beyond, and that this is taught in

the passage we need not abandon hope. We need not believe that the will which is most resolutely set in evil can always hold out against the influence of the Divine love. Long and hard may be the struggle, but the resistance will at last give way. Like a rebellious child, melted to tears by the mother's long persuasion, the soul will at last fall sobbing and penitent upon the bosom of the infinite compassion.

The sin itself, therefore, originally was ascribing the works and words of Jesus to an evil source instead of to the spirit of God. This sin was not committed ignorantly or under partial light, but in the full splendor that streamed from his matchless life. The same sin may in spirit be committed to-day by opposing light and truth. He who opposes the light and the truth of his own time, who thinks he has everything, who shuts the gates of his mind and bolts them with strong prejudices, sins against himself and his age. "The choice goes by forever 'twixt *that* darkness and *that* light."

II. On the basis of this exposition, I remark as follows:

1. Jesus makes a distinction between himself and the spirit of which he speaks, between himself and God.

He was not moved by any personal feeling. Men may ridicule and blaspheme him as an indi-

vidual, if they will; that can be borne. But he stands aghast that they should sin against the spirit of light, and of goodness, and of truth, behind him, the spirit that girds him and guides him. Jesus felt that there was a power greater and wiser than himself from which he received light and strength. But if he had believed that he himself was God, he would never have made the distinction he did in the guilt of blasphemy. In that case blasphemy against himself would have been equally heinous, equally difficult of pardon. In discriminating, as he did, he assigned himself a lower rank in the universe than the one to which he is commonly raised, and marked himself the instrument of a mightier power. He came to teach truth and to work righteousness. To this end he is equipped by the Spirit of Truth, whose other name is God. So fully is he in sympathy with that spirit, so completely is he guided by it, that for men to attribute its work to the prince of darkness, so shocks and appalls him that when speech comes to his lips, he pours it forth in the terrible warning: "Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, is guilty of an age-long sin."

2. This leads to the remark that the warnings against sin are always clear and emphatic—clear and emphatic as they come from the lips of Jesus,

clear and emphatic as they are proclaimed in the laws of nature.

Those who believe that sin will finally be conquered in all souls do not make sin any the less terrible; rather, more terrible. The charge is often brought that we underestimate sin and minimize its penalty. Not so. We believe that "every transgression and disobedience receives a just recompense," but we do not believe that it receives more than is just. Justice is not brutality, justice is not cruelty. Justice does not demand pain for the sake of pain; but so much as will burn out the transgression. We do not object to the figure of justice, with sword and with balances evenly poised; we object to substituting for that fair form, a hideous being, painted black, with horns and hoofs, breathing fire and brandishing a three-pronged fork. Sin is terrible. It carries its punishment with it. In this life or the life hereafter suffering goes hand in hand with broken law. Flight from sin is the only escape from penalty. There is no refuge but righteousness. There is no deliverance but goodness. No man can escape the lash till he ceases to be a slave. "Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell!" From this pit of torment there is but one way out,—the way that is open now, the way that will never be closed—repentance and a better life. That way let every one who feels dissatisfied with himself, who feels his

need of something more and something nobler, begin today. It is folly to defer until the chains of habit are still more firmly riveted.

"Long is the way and hard,
That out of hell leads up to light."

3. We have spoken of the sin against the Holy Spirit as a sin against light and knowledge. By whom was it committed? It was committed by members of the established church; by those who belonged to the ruling religious sect of that day.

I have sometimes thought it might not be amiss to inquire whether even today we could not more easily find those who committed this transgression, among the competent expounders of obsolete dogmas than among the timid and sensitive souls who are driven by such expounders to self-accusation. I should like to suggest the inquiry whether it is not a sin against the light of this age, against great light, for ministers to go on year after year ringing changes upon the words *everlasting* and *hell* and *damnation*, when the ablest scholars and critics of the world, have shown conclusively that those terms ought not to stand in a correctly translated version of the New Testament; and when we have a version that so greatly modifies their harshness of sound and meaning? Are there not hundreds today who are guilty of this age-long sin? I should also like to suggest the inquiry whether it is not a sin against light and knowledge for men

who have the means for informing themselves in regard to the position of a liberal church, to refuse so to inform themselves and to go on year after year misrepresenting the position of such a church? Are there not many whose prejudices make them commit that sin against light? It might also be suggested that to preach a theology which disgraced even the darkest ages of the world—a theology that still clings to a personal devil, a wrathful God, a pitiless doom,—in an age when science and a broader spirit of humanity have lifted the thought and life of mankind, is also a sin against light. It is blasphemy against the holy spirit of truth!

4. In conclusion. Terrible and long-reaching as are the effects of sin, we believe that evil is only incidental, and not a necessary part of the universe or of the human soul.

God has not made provision for his own defeat. Evil is doomed. Says Julius Mueller: "Good has but one enemy, the evil; but the evil has two enemies, the good and itself." The world is not hopeless, the future is not rayless. Even beyond the "age-long" sin there is a streak of dawn.

"Then thro' the gates of Pain, I dream,
A wind of heaven blows coolly in;
Fainter the awful discords seem,
The smoke of torment grows more thin;
Tears quench the burning soil, and thence
Spring pale, sweet flowers of penitence;

And thro' the dreary realm of man's despair,
Star-crowned, an angel walks, and lo! God's hope
is there."

The souls of the redeemed will never be quite content, unless some arbitrary decree shall turn their hearts into stone, while there is sin and suffering anywhere within the dominions of their king.

There is a fable by Anderson. In the forest high up on the sea-shore stood a very old oak tree. Once the tree dreamed a dream. It seemed as if new life were thrilling through every fiber of root and stem and leaf, rising even to the highest branches. The tree felt itself spreading out and stretching higher, while through the roots beneath the earth ran the warm vigor of life. As he grew higher and still higher, with increased strength, his topmost boughs became broader and fuller; and, in proportion to his growth, his self-satisfaction increased, and with it arose a joyous longing to grow higher and higher, to reach even to the sun itself. Already had his topmost branches pierced the clouds, which floated beneath them like troops of birds of passage. The stars became visible in broad daylight, large and sparkling, like clear and gentle eyes. These were wonderful and happy moments for the old tree, full of peace and joy. Yet, amidst all this happiness the tree felt a yearning, longing desire that all the other trees,

bushes, herbs and flowers beneath him might be able to rise higher as he had done, and to see all this splendor and experience all this happiness. The grand, majestic oak could not be quite happy in the midst of all his enjoyment, while all the rest, both small and great, were not with him. At length his longing was satisfied. Up through the clouds came the green summits of the forest trees. Bush and herb shot upward. "But where is the little blue flower that grows by the stream?" asked the oak; "and where is the purple bell-flower and the daisy?" "We are all here!" came the answer. "Why, this is too beautiful to be believed," exclaimed the oak: "I have them all; not one has been forgotten."

Think you that any soul, redeemed from the bondage of sin, living and growing in the upper atmosphere, radiant in the sunlight that streams from the throne, will be satisfied while there is sin and suffering and degradation beneath it? Brave words were those of Farrar: "Unless my whole nature were utterly changed, I can imagine no immortality which would not be abhorrent to me if it were accompanied with the knowledge that millions and millions and millions of poor suffering wretches, some of whom on earth I had known and loved, were withering in an agony without end or hope." But it shall not be. The uplifted oak shall have his companions of the forest, the trees,

the bushes, the bell-flower and the daisy, so that he shall exclaim: "I have them all; not one has been forgotten!" So shall there come a time, in the long sweep of ages, when the exalted spirit shall have the companions and friends of its earthly career, and be able to exclaim: "I have them all; not one has been forgotten; not one has been left to perish!"

In the rapture of that crowning consummation, in that day when God shall be supreme in every life and throughout the universe, love's broken circle shall be made complete and glorious; the sundered ties of earth shall be reunited, and all the lost treasures shall be given back to aching hearts and empty arms; for

> "Life is ever lord of Death,
> And Love can never lose its own."

XII.

OUR GOD A CONSUMING FIRE.

[Sunday Evening, April 30, 1893.]

"For our God is a consuming fire."—HEBREWS, 12:29.

Some one who visited the battle-field of Bull Run, several years after the war, saw pure, delicate flowers growing out of empty ammunition boxes. A cunning scarlet verbena was peeping out of a huge fragment of a shell, in which strange pot it had been planted. A graceful rose was thrusting its head through the top of a broken Union drum, which doubtless sounded its last charge in that battle. Vines and blossoms were trailing over bones that lay white and unburied where they fell. Over all that scene of carnage these tokens of peace and beauty had sprung up and were blossoming,—bright-faced prophets of the nation's future.

Many of these old texts have been battlefields. Over what part of the Bible have not the armies of controversy raged? Men will never read that book aright till they cease asking as the primary question, "What does it prove?" and ask instead, "What principles of conduct does it inculcate? What inspiration to the highest living does it furnish? I do not come to this text for the pur-

pose of fighting. I shall walk where others have hacked their foes and scarred the earth, as he who went to Bull Run, to see what flowers I can gather; for upon this scorched and awful ground, "Our God is a consuming fire," are growing blossoms of faith and hope and love.

It has been customary to quote this text in the interest of certain views of God and man that are terrible in the extreme. Whenever these words are mentioned, pictures of wrath and vengeance fill the mind. Men think of the fables of mythological hells. They think of the lost as suffering endless woe, circled by flames that God's hand has kindled. We shall see, I trust, that such a use of the text is unwarranted. In the story of Balaam, whom Balak hired to curse Israel, the prophet's words of malediction were turned to blessings on his lips. He tried to curse Israel, but could not. This text is not an anathema, but a benediction.

I am told that these words are inconsistent with the unlimited sweep given to that other text, "God is love," or rather that they present another side of the divine character, the side of that justice which is an essential part. It is said that we almost exclusively quote the one and neglect the other. If this implies any antagonism between love and justice, we can not admit it, for justice, in the last analysis, is one form that love assumes; one direction in which love operates. How end-

lessly varied are the forms of water! The same drop that I see sparkling in the stream that dashes at my feet, I see afterward dancing in spray-like beauty over the falls; I see it moving to the gulf in the majestic Mississippi. I see it again in the great ocean, riding up and down on mountain-like waves; I see it ascending sky-ward in the mist; I see it rolling in the clouds; I see it shining like an angel in the rainbow. How many transformations, —yet it remains the same. Love takes shapes as many. We see it in what is done for the poor and call it charity. We see it in respect for one's self and call it rectitude and honor. We see it ascending to God and call it worship. We see it administering law for wise ends and call it justice. So that justice, after all, is love. There is no conflict.

I. When our God is spoken of as a consuming fire, it must be remembered that fire in itself may be an agent for good as well as for evil. It depends entirely upon what is behind it; what kindles it and uses it. To speak of the consuming fire unqualified in any way, settles nothing.

In the hand of an incendiary, fire is an evil thing It burns without remorse; it consumes without stint. It lays waste that which is beautiful as well as that which is unsightly. The match dropped by a designing hand may cause a conflagration that devours the work of centuries. It may run through the streets of a city and lay the proudest

palaces and rudest hovels side by side in indistinguishable ashes. It may sweep through a forest and reduce sturdy trees—the growths of ages—to blackened ruins. It may rage over a prairie, driving human beings before it in agonized fright. It may be used by evil men for the most cruel purposes. Nero lighted his gardens with burning Christians, and many a martyr-fire since that day has been kindled around the faithful. It is in this way, I fear, that God is too often thought of when men speak of him as a consuming fire. They deem that there is such a feeling in his breast against evil doers that he remorselessly pursues them through this world and the next as a flaming fire pursues its objects over a broad prairie. It is supposed that, Nero-like, he lights the darkness of the next world with burning human beings. If it be so, God is just as much worse than a human tyrant as his power is greater.

But now, upon the other hand, that word fire forms the root of one of the noblest words in our language, "purify." It comes from the Greek PUR, meaning fire. Purify means to take through the fire. A thing purified is something that has been through the fire. From a very early date, rude and savage tribes have practiced what is called purification by fire. They practiced it particularly in cases of disease. It was supposed that all maladies were so many defilements of the pure

principle that had been broken by the demons of night. The traditions of the Finns assert that lightning, the fiery sword of Ukko, slays the demons of illness. (It was discovered, however, that there were grave draw-backs attending the use of lightning in disease. In the first place, it was difficult to obtain it at the right time; and, in the the second place, when it did come, the patient got too much, an over-dose that killed him instead of healing the disease.)

In course of time, among more enlightened tribes, ambassadors were refused admittance to the presence of a sovereign until they had traversed a flame which should singe the foreign deviltries which they carried with them. Fire was also early used in religious ceremonies. In the hill regions of southern India, penitents were made to pass through a row of burning huts, and were absolved after having passed the seventh. The same idea found place in Christianity, in what is called the baptism of fire. Valentinus rebaptized those who had received baptism out of his sect, and drew them through the fire. Heraclion, who is cited by Clement of Alexandria, said that some applied hot irons to the ears of the baptized. In all of these old customs we find evidence of the value attached to fire as a purifying agent.

When we turn to the Old Testament we find the same idea under the figure of a furnace—the fur

nace into which gold and silver were thrown to purge away their dross. One of the prophets says of God, "He is like a refiner's fire." Another says, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver that they may offer unto God an offering in righteousness." Here the object of the fire is expressly declared to be the purging away of dross, in order that those thus purified might offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness. These are but specimen passages. It is related that some years ago, in the city of Dublin, a company of ladies were studying these passages. After some discussion, a committee was appointed to call upon a silversmith, and learn what they could upon the subject. The silversmith readily showed them the process of refining. Said he, "I must sit with my eyes steadily fixed upon the metal, for if the time necessary for refining be exceeded in the slightest degree, it is sure to be injured, and I only know when the process is complete by seeing my own image reflected in the silver." No illustration can better serve our purpose. We know that the refining fire in God's furnace has done its work when his image is reflected in the human soul.

In the New Testament what was Gehenna itself but a place where purifying fires were forever kept burning; and if we carry out this symbolism, that

which men have inferred from such expressions to be a place of torment, becomes a furnace of purification. Paul says that a man's work may be destroyed, but that he himself shall be saved, "yet so as by fire." The salvation of a man very often depends upon the burning up of much of his work, and much in his own life out of which that work sprang. The fact is, that fire is our only salvation, and each of us may thank God that He is a consuming flame.

II. This brings us to that other text, "God is love." We might substitute the one expression for the other and say, Love is a consuming fire. God so loves us that He will not tolerate our faults and our sins. He so loves us that the flame of his purifying affection will burn them out.

> "Thou judgest us; thy purity
> Doth all our lusts condemn.
> The love that draws us nearer thee
> Is hot with wrath to them."

It is a mistake to suppose that love is mere amiability, that it is mere moon-faced benevolence, that it is mere good nature, foolishly smiling upon that which it lacks the power to remedy. Love uses severity. It has but one thing in mind—the good of its object. Whatever means may be necessary to serve the best interests of that object it does not hesitate to use. It uses the lash when the lash is needed. We may learn a lesson from

human love. The more deep and pure it is, the more is it pained at the faults and follies of its object. The love that interests one in what that soul may become, that sees with clear vision the possibilities wrapped up in it, that forms for it an ideal, that sets before it a goal to be attained—such a love will not permit smoothness to divert its aims when sterner methods are needed. The highest proof of love is that it works in every way to remove blemishes, to present its object without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

In the case of a parent who truly loves her child, many things may be essential which seem to the child harsh and cruel, but the mother knows that they must be employed in order to train the child in the right way. She suffers when it is needful to give pain, when it is necessary to deny something, when discipline is imperative. She suffers more than the child, and she suffers because she knows that the child does not understand the meaning of all her methods; yet she so loves the child that she says: "You must be your best at whatever cost to you or me."

That is the best friendship which is absolutely candid; in which one seeks the good of the other, not only by smooth and genial efforts, but by honest, faithful criticism as well. When the distinguished Dr. Paley was a student at Christ's College, Cambridge, though his natural abilities were

great, he was thoughtless, idle, and a spendthrift, and at the commencement of his third year, he had made comparatively little progress. One morning a friend stood at his bedside. "Paley," said he, "I have not been able to sleep thinking about you. I have been thinking what a fool you are. I have the means of dissipation and can afford to be idle, if any one can. You are poor and can not afford to. I could do nothing probably even though I were to try. You are capable of doing anything. I have lain awake all night thinking of your folly, and I have now come solemnly to warn you that as you value my friendship you must not persist in your indolence and go on in this way." This is human love.

This much we know in our little circle. From this we are able to argue to the higher love. We have in our own nature the only means of reading the divine nature. In that which is highest in man we find out essentially what God is like. We have in ourselves the key, hints and suggestions. When we become acquainted with the real nature of man in its loftiest moods and aspects, we know what God is and upon what principles his actions proceed. Some one relates: "When I lived in the woods of Indiana, I used to hear a great deal about the inflorescence of the prairies in the spring. I tried to imagine what it was. I had never seen a prairie, and I was filled with curiosity to see one, especially

at that season of the year when the flowers were in bloom, of which I had heard such glowing descriptions. I had to make up some sort of a notion respecting them, and I did the best I could. I put my garden alongside of another, and I added several others to these, and then I thought of all the flowers they would contain, but it was a comparatively limited idea that I had in mind, and I remember very well the morning when I first rode out upon a real rolling prairie. After passing through a piece of woods, I struck it. The sun was shining aslant, for it was about nine o'clock. The dew was on the grass and on the flowers, and very soon I was out at sea—or the effect was the same as if I had been. I could see no timber in any direction. It looked as if the prairie went to a point where the sky touched it in front, on the right and on the left. Flowers covered every little swell and every hillside. It seemed as if all the flowers in creation had been collected there. Further than the eye could reach the ground was covered with flowers. It looked as if the sun had dropped down upon the earth and stained everything with his colors, and it was easy to conceive that if I should go on and on, if I should travel all day and to-morrow and the next day and the next week, I should still find flowers. And what was my garden conception of the prairie, compared with what I took in when I saw one?"

And yet, in his own little garden patch, the tiniest flower was a revelation of the gorgeously colored acres that spread out before him. One little flower contained the secret of all those blossoming areas. And so, although God exceeds all that the eye hath seen or ear heard, all that has entered into the heart of man to conceive, yet the heart of man itself gives us the alphabet by which we can spell out the nature, the processes, the principles of action, of Him who is infinite and unsearchable.

III. Let us follow this principle of interpretation and ask, What is God's object in regard to his children? What is the object of those chastisements and penalties to which they are subjected? I answer: To save. Not to punish for the sake of inflicting pain; not to gratify his own feeling of outraged justice. He does not lay on his lash to see the victim writhe, saying to him at every stroke, "You deserve it." If he did, I should never mention his name again. I will not worship a demon though he be clothed in purple and lifted on high. I will worship God, who uses severity for the purpose of salvation. He does not punish because souls in heaven will not be safe if he does not. Such a heaven would not be worth preserving. If the redeemed can only be kept within the jasper battlements because the lost are suffering untold horrors that stretch through endless time, then let the jasper battlements be razed and

heaven itself destroyed! Penalty is sent in love. The fire burns to purify.

Love must have control of and guide justice, even among men. Justice without love is mere brutality. Justice administered without taking the culprit himself into account is justice that ought not be heard of in a civilized country. It may indeed be needful to protect the interests of society, and different nations and communities may require different methods of administering justice, different penalties for crime, but we ought to be growing towards a state of society in which the culprit himself shall not be lost sight of. He has not forfeited every right. He has not placed himself beyond the reach of human endeavor. He has not annulled his relationship to the race. He has not cancelled the fact that he is still a creature of God. In recent times the reformatory element in penalty is made more and more prominent. Let us admit that it may not be the only element, the only thing to be attended to; but that will be the best and safest condition of society that shall be able to make a criminal put his crimes away and become an upright member of society. All that we ought to desire for any one is that he become good. If he has wronged us never so deeply, to see him put aside his evil life, cast away his wrong habits, and build up a worthy character, is the sweetest revenge that a human being could ask.

Which would be better under the divine government, to have even such men as Nero and Caligula and all the rest of that infamous host whose names the world has not ceased to execrate—which would be better—to perpetuate their sins, so to inflict penalty, that the spirits of those men will continue rebellious and intractable forever, or so to deal with them that somewhere, some time, their sins shall cease? Which is better, for God to protract evil through the entire future, or some day to bring it to an end?

God's retributions are mercies, and those mercies follow along the lines of natural law, so that we may say, when a violated law brings its consequences, "It is the hand of God." We do not mean that there are direct inflictions. We mean that he has so arranged the order of this universe that penalty follows transgression as inevitably as darkness follows the setting of the sun. His wisdom and goodness are shown in this arrangement. The pangs and stings of conscience, twinges of remorse, fearful looking for of retribution—these are God's dealings with the soul, and they are merciful. They will not cease in this world or the next until his object has been accomplished. These are the fires that consume. They burn out and destroy that which is evil and they refine and purify that which is good.

"Our God is a consuming fire." "It is not that

the fire will burn us if we do not worship God," says George MacDonald, "but that the fire will burn us until we do worship God." "Our God is a consuming fire." In these words we read not the doom of man, but the doom of evil. "Our God is a consuming fire." In these words we read not the destruction of sinners, but the destruction of their sins. "Our God is a consuming fire" is one of the strongest prophecies of the triumph of purity and goodness. It assures us that all wickedness in the individual and the universe shall at last be consumed; that all righteousness shall at last shine forth refined and triumphant. Burn on, O flame of cleansing, till the deepest dungeon of the pit shall be purged; till the foulest soul that rolls and swelters in depravity shall become pure and bright as the loftiest angel that casts his crown at Jehovah's feet!

XIII.

THE REMEDY OF OBLIVION.

AN ABSTRACT.

[Sunday Evening, May 1, 1892.]

It is a significant fact that the mind refuses to be satisfied with the present, and constantly turns toward the future. Exhort as we will, "attend to the duty of the hour," even while the hand is on the plow, the mind is soaring beyond field and furrow into space. The reasons do not lie far away. Only a little while ago we were not here. In a little while we shall go hence—whither? We all have friends whose names to-day we read upon marble. Shall we meet them beyond the grave? Or, are they vanished forever? For these reasons we shall always stand questioning at the door of the great silence and mystery.

One of the most absorbing topics of speculation is that furnished by the fate of those who go out of this life without having passed through what the church calls conversion.

Three answers are given:

(1) They pass to a state of conscious torment that is endless.

(2) They are blotted out—annihilated.

(3) They suffer the penalty due to their sins, but are finally restored by the persistent love of God to a state of holiness.

These are the only solutions possible. The first holds the principal place in the creeds and in traditional theology; but has suffered much in recent years from the revolt of popular sentiment.

The second has been invented to get rid of the first. It is more humane and merciful. Better the dreamless sleep than the interminable woe.

If this were the only alternative, we should not long hesitate. We should prefer it to the horrible blasphemy which fastens upon the character of God the stigma of an eternal inquisition. But we believe that it is possible for God to do something better with the worst and vilest of his creatures than torture them forever or bury them in oblivion.

I have on other occasions dealt with the first of these answers; tonight I mean to consider the second and contrast it with the third.

If we can conceive of all souls as finally perfected, even by the discipline of suffering, is not that by far the noblest view of all? This is admitted by the able and scholarly minister in our city who has recently announced his conversion to the doctrine of annihilation. "It is a pleasing theory and we wish it were true."

I. LET ME SAY, THEN, IN THE FIRST PLACE, THAT THERE IN NO ADVANTAGE CLAIMED BY HIM FOR THE THEORY OF ANNIHILATION THAT IS NOT POSSESSED IN MORE EMINENT DEGREE BY THAT OF RESTORATION.

1. It lays equal "emphasis upon the destructive and deadly nature of sin."

We believe, too, that "no theology can survive the strain of careful thought which does not hold in firm grasp the destructive, disastrous, deadly nature of sin." We believe in the doctrine that "every transgression and disobedience shall receive a just recompense of reward." What more than this is needed? Is not the sinfulness of sin recognized when its appropriate penalty is visited upon it? Everyone who believes in the soul's ultimate restoration, believes that prior to that time the demands of justice will be fully met, and that not even a vicarious sacrifice can set them aside.

2. This view interprets equally well the "symbolism of scripture."

(1) The terms "life" and "death" indicate moral conditions, not duration, not mere existence, or its negation. "This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God." Death is alienation and disobedience.

(2) The rhetoric of destruction applied to sinners may be interpreted as meaning their destruction as sinners, not as souls. The emperor of

China once signified his intention of destroying the rebels in a certain province. He afterwards explained that he had done so by making them loyal. Sin and evil will be destroyed; men will be saved—even though it be "as by fire."

(3) The flames of "Gehenna" find their parallel, not in a garbage crematory of the universe, but in the experiences of the individual soul; in the fires of conscience that burn until the soul's dross and refuse, the sins and follies, are forever consumed. Who does not know, even here, what it is to be cast into the "Gehenna of fire?"

3. And when we leave this symbolism, we find that the view of restoration harmonizes best with the operations of God in the natural world.

(1) The fittest, indeed, survive. But how long does it take to find that fitness out? Fitness is harmony with environment? But when is this determined? In nature it takes time to settle the question. In the moral realm, we dare not say that we have the whole of the story here. And if not, may we not think that in the resources of the Almighty, it may be possible to fit all for survival?

(2) The struggle here is not quite the same as in the natural world where the physically weak go to the wall. We are under a higher law—to bear the infirmities of the weak, to strengthen them; and the God of whose love this law is an expres-

sion is himself pledged to the morally weak and infirm.

4. Does the theory of annihilation vindicate the "goodness of God?" How much ampler the vindication, if all souls are restored!

I grant the statement. "Your modern physician will scarcely allow a man to suffer the most trivial surgical operation without the application of an anæsthetic, but according to the theory which is held by many people * * God proposes to keep in eternal consciousness multitudes of people to whom he denies even the poor comfort of an anæsthetic at last." Yes; but if your physician could *cure* by deep probing, even pain would be justifiable. But has God, the great physician, so hopeless a case that all he can do is to administer opiates? What disease can he not cure? And if he can cure and will, his goodness is vindicated.

5. Does the obliteration of the wicked allow us "to look forward to a perfected universe?" Does not the theory of restoration give the same vision, but larger and clearer?

"Every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever. And

the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped."

II. BUT THERE ARE CERTAIN POSITIVE OBJECTIONS TO THE THEORY OF ANNIHILATION, WHEN WE COME TO CONSIDER IT IN ITSELF.

1. It destroys punishment in any proper sense. It abolishes penalty in any fair use of the word. In this view of the case, there can be no such thing as penalty.

(1) Do you say, "The annihilation itself is penalty?" How? "The fear of it." Many desire it. If they could be assured of it, they would rejoice. It removes all dread of suffering hereafter.

(2) Do you say, "Even if they are blotted out, they suffer and are punished here?" Then what is accomplished? What does this suffering amount to after the stroke has ceased in endless unconsciousness? What good did it do? What purpose did it serve? The statue on which the strokes of the chisel fell, is ground to powder—destroyed as a statue. Where are the marks of the chisel now? Where are the results in marble?

2. Where is the line? Who are the incorrigible? The young and half-formed? Surely not. The criminal? Many a desperate character has been reformed. The old? They often change at the very last. Can we say that there is ever a time when all possibility of good is destroyed?

3. Say what we will, it stamps the universe as a failure.

Is not the same plan in all? Are not all capable of goodness and happiness? Is not the failure of one the failure of the entire scheme?

Says Rev. John W. Chadwick: "The sense of greatness and imperishable worth feeds not the stream of our immortal hope a whit more generously than the sense of human weakness, maimed and stunted life, arrested development, men and women for whom life is not worth living, if this life be all. * * What logic there is here, I pause not to discover. My only claim is that the hope of immortality fed by the sense of this human misery, this longing that the most miserable of men shall have a chance to live before they die forever, is not an ignoble, not an unworthy hope. By this sign it conquers, if by no other. The criticism usually comes from those who dream a dream of an ideal and perfected humanity here on this earth. It is a noble dream ennobling all who cherish it and strive to realize some little fraction here and now of its sublime integrity. But if this dream is noble and ennobling, what can there be ignoble and debasing in the dream of a good time coming for the millions upon millions who can not live to see that glorious day, who have already endured the evil of existence for a little while and gone their way—whither? While I have life I will

never surrender the hope that they have gone to other life and larger opportunities."

The only rational and satisfactory conclusion:

> "Not one life shall be destroyed,
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When God hath made the pile complete!"

XIV.

PERSONAL VERSUS IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.

[Sunday Morning, Dec. 6, 1891.]

"My little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."—I JOHN 3 : 7.

The little church of St. James by the Deep Stream is the oldest in Venice. It is crumbling now, and is no longer used for worship. It stands in the midst of the market place. The stalls of the buyers and sellers have crept close to the base of the sanctuary. Upon the venerable structure, this inscription may still be read: "Around this temple let the merchant's law be just, his weights true, and his covenants faithful." A good motto to be placed over the doors of every church that stands in the heart of a busy city,—a good text for the preaching within! It illustrates the sentiment of the words I have read from John. This sentiment is also illustrated by an old ledger which was recently brought to light in Edinburgh, Scotland. It belonged to a merchant of the sixteenth century. At the top of the inside board, the bookkeeper inscribed the words: "God bless this book and keep me and it honest." A business man in our own city related to me one day a transac-

tion, of which he said, "I followed the best light I had, but I have often wondered what Jesus Christ would have done in the same circumstances." A man who can ask that question in sincerity is not likely to go far astray.

The text may be paraphrased: Let there be no misunderstanding about this matter. The righteous man, he who is justified in the sight of God, is the man who does right just as Christ himself did right; who stands before heaven and earth on the basis of his own character, just as Christ stands upon the basis of his character. Let no one lead you astray by teaching you that there is any being in this universe who can take your place in obedience or in penalty. Every man stands for himself; there is no righteousness that avails for him but his own. There is no punishment but that which he himself suffers for his own transgressions. The penalty which ought to fall upon him is never laid upon the shoulders of another. Sooner or later the blow falls where it belongs. There is nothing more firmly established than the great law: "Every transgression and disobedience shall receive a just recompense of reward."

When you come to investigate the matter closely, you will find that the Church of the Redeemer is one of the few churches in our city that believe in any real penalty for sin,—notwithstanding the charge is constantly made that we let the sinner

go free. Is it not true, however, that our brethren who bring this accusation, by some strange paradox, teach constantly and persistently that there is some sort of arrangement in the Divine government by which a man need not suffer punishment for his sins; that he can shift the penalty to Christ? Is not one of their favorite revival hymns, "Jesus died and paid it all"? Does not the Venerable Confession say of the elect: "His obedience and satisfaction were accepted in their stead"? "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth." How? "By imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith"? Is not this the common teaching of the pulpit? And does it not contravene the statement of the text: "He that *doeth* righteousness is righteous"? Not he who has it imputed, or in some mysterious way imparted, but he who works it out in his own heart and life,—he is righteous in the only true and proper sense.

It is not often that I have the privilege of listening to the preaching of others. Sometimes, however, on a summer evening, during the season when we hold but a single service, I am thus favored. So I listened a few months ago to a distinguished and successful clergyman of our own city. Through most of his sermon, he emphasized the immutability of law in the moral as well as in the natural

world. I said to myself, "That is good! We could not make that any stronger down at the Church of the Redeemer." But in closing, he said, in substance: "My young friends, God foresaw that you could not or would not keep his laws, so he sent Christ to take your place; and if you only believe in him, you stand before God as if you had never sinned. Your transgressions are blotted out, and the penalty is set aside!" And then I said to myself, "That closing remark, instead of completing the temple so nobly begun, shatters the very foundation!"

In strong contrast with the doctrine of the creed and the words of the preacher, stands the text: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." This is one of the most important verses in the New Testament. It marks out the only path of salvation. It stretches from earth to the throne of the Eternal. The glory of the hereafter lies along the pathway, and at the end of the pathway of righteousness. "Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

I. The word from which our term *righteousness* comes, implies a comparison or standard. It means originally *even* or *equal* or *like*. There is something beyond the object spoken of in connection with the adjective righteous. That object is

even with, or equal to, or like something else. A righteous man, therefore, is one who conforms to a certain moral or spiritual standard.

What is that standard? What is the law by which we must be measured? It is God's law written in the soul of man, in his body, in the constitution of the universe and of human society,—God's law illustrated in the character of Jesus Christ. Conformity with this law is righteousness. Without consenting to that monstrous theological fiction, the fall of the race in Adam, whereby we are all said to be under the curse of the law and deserving of endless fire, it is true that every one has, to a greater or lesser extent, gotten away from the divine statutes, and needs to be brought back. He is out of harmony with the thought and life of God; out of harmony with his own better and nobler self. The links have been broken and must be welded again. Men are saved when they return to their forsaken allegiance. They are in the way of salvation when they re-enter the dominion of law. They are lost, so long as they continue to violate—in this world or in that which is to come. Locality makes no difference; time makes no difference. It is the inward spirit that builds the walls of Paradise or digs deep the infernal pit!

The growth of the soul to the full measure of its new stature will be gradual. A moment may

suffice for the beginning; but there is no process by which a complete transformation of character can be suddenly effected. It can not be done before one comes to the death-bed; it can not be done upon the death-bed. As we leave this life we enter that which lies beyond. The methods by which character is changed and uplifted must be very much the same there as here,—slow and progressive. We believe, indeed, that entire deliverance from the power of sin will at last be effected; but there as here we must pass through the refining and purifying fires of God's consuming love. It is very true that no ceremony performed over a dying man will fit him for the kingdom of God; neither will a "drop of blood applied to his soul"—whatever that may mean. It is not in order for anyone to criticize "extreme unction" who believes that by any other sort of legerdemain the blackness of human iniquity may be instantaneously converted into the whiteness of heaven.

What is the remedy for human lawlessness? Not to have the laws done away; not to change our definition of salvation; not to have another method introduced which nullifies the law and loosens its grip; but to conform, to become obedient, to do right, think aright, live aright, until the right becomes incarnate in us, as it was in him of whom it was written:

"And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,

In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought,

"Which he may read who binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house or digs the grave,
Or those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef."

The sooner we get over the idea that some one else can obey and satisfy justice in our stead, the better. The sooner we get over the notion that character is transferable,—the sooner we cease trying to lift ourselves into heaven by clutching another's robe of righteousness,—the sooner we cease trying to wash away our sins in the blood of an innocent person,—the better for our moral power, the better for our self-respect. Even if all this could be done, we ought not to permit ourselves thus to be carried to the skies. Even were such substitutionary measures possible, it would be unspeakably base in us to permit the guiltless to bear the rod and languish in the dungeons for sins that we have committed. Dull must our sense of honor be if, with full understanding of all that such vicariousness involves, we could meekly and even gratefully acquiesce in such an arrangement. But the arrangement cannot be made. That is the all-important fact. The substitution of one person's suffering and obedience for another's is out of the question. Righteousness by imputation is just what the term indicates —righteousness by imagination. God looks upon us and accounts us righteous, although he knows

that in reality we are not. He says, "They shall be to me as if they had the holiness of Jesus," when he knows that we have not the holiness of Jesus. Thus does this theory not only weaken the principles of honor and self-respect in man, but it makes God, the infinite wisdom, play tricks upon his own intelligence.

Well saith John, the Beloved, "Let no one lead you astray." Let us not deceive ourselves. Christ is the wise master-builder; but we must hew the stones, and mix the mortar, and build the structure. We work under his direction, it is true, but the work must be done by us and not by him. Those who live upon the sea-shore hear the unceasing anthem of the deep. Whatever the life may be upon the strand, above the voices and laughter of the crowd, the rattle and roar of business, the solemn music is heard. So over all the voices of the earth, comes the resounding message of the skies: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." We hear it above the debates of councils, above the clashing of creeds, above the Babel of theology. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." We hear it above the clamor of the pulpit; we hear it above the congratulations of the thoughtless and easy-going, glad that they have some one to assume their liabilities. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." This anthem will roll on till all opposing voices have been

hushed, till all hearts begin to keep time and tune with its solemn and majestic strains, for it is the echo of the everlasting ocean. It is the music of God's righteousness, supreme and infinite.

II. I shall now be asked, what place have you left for love? It seems to be all law. I reply that there is no place for love outside of a universe of law. Browning says:

"I have gone the whole round of creation; I spake as I saw; I report as a man may of God's work: all's love, but all's law."

The love of God is shown in every principle he has established. Every law is rooted in his own heart. Not unless his own nature be reversed, can he do otherwise than he has done. His love is shown in establishing the goal; his love is shown in all the moral and spiritual influences he has given to strengthen us for the race. He means to bring us to himself; he means to make us like him in character; and to this end he has shaped the universe. "Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God almighty, in wisdom hast thou made them all!"

Some one asks me whether we are not saved by faith, whether this is not the teaching in many parts of the New Testament. Certainly, but what is faith? A substitute for law? No; not so. It is a motive power to bring us up to law. What is faith? Not a barren, speculative, intellectual belief. Men may say, according to James, "I believe

in God;" but that, he tells us, in itself, amounts to nothing. The faith that James preaches is a faith in righteousness, a faith in good works, a faith in love, purity, benevolence; a faith in the reality of the highest qualities of the soul; a faith that takes hold of all things good and true and translates them into character and conduct.

This explains what faith in Christ means. How men have fought over that question! How they have insisted that it meant acceptance of certain views of his person and work! How they have rent his seamless robe, and used the fragments to flaunt defiance in each others' faces! Faith in Christ means belief in such a life as he led, in the great spiritual principles which he illustrates, in the possibility of basing the structure of character upon those principles. That is what it means. It is the soul's grasp upon the eternal verities that he exemplifies.

This explains what is meant when he is spoken of as a Saviour. We may receive inspiration and stimulus; we may be lifted up by fresh impulses out of the old way of living, and sent forward along new pathways. This is the only sort of spiritual help we can receive from any one. In the early summer, I pass by a field of corn in which the stalks are all small and withered, yellow and sickly. The roadside dust has gathered thick upon them; the tender blades are weighed down

under the burden. I think I can hear each feeble blade murmuring the question: "Who will save us?' "What shall help us?" "What shall bring us to the noble stalks and ripened ears?" At length the clouds gather, send down their rain, and the fields rejoice. The plants all shout: "We are saved by the rain!" What did the rain do? Take the place of the corn? Bear the burden of the dust, the hot furnace of the sun? No; it went down to the roots of the corn, it stimulated their growth, it put new life and vigor into the withered blade; and thus by the influence of the rain, the stalks began to grow towards the fulness and gold of Autumn!

This is the work of Christ. It is by the fresh incitement, by the moral quickening he gives us, that he saves. He does not come into the world to free men from the restraints of the law, or to take upon himself the penalty of their transgressions; it is because of his uplifting qualities that he has become the mighty power we find him. Suppose you discover a man in the gutter, drunk and deserted. How would you set about it, if you wanted to effect his reformation? Would you go to him and say, "You have violated the laws of the city, but I will go to the lock-up for you; I will pay your fine to-morrow morning; I will be sober in your stead; I will bear all your iniquities and your penalties; and in the eyes of the authori-

ties, I will be considered the drunken and you the sober one!" How much of a reformation would that effect? And yet multitudes think that this is Christ's method of reforming the world. What would you do? You would try to reach the latent and obscured manhood in that drunkard. You would try to eradicate his appetite by all the means that are known. You would try to inspire him with such hope and trust in the possibility of reformation, with such noble thoughts and ideas as would lead him to make the effort to bring his soul into the ascendant. It is in this way precisely that we are saved by Christ. By his own truth and life, and by these alone, does he awaken the desire for truth and holiness, and spur us on to the accomplishment.

Men have apprehended his work differently, have described it in different terms; but the root of the whole matter is that he taught the world how to live and gave from his own life the impulse. The blackest sinners looking upon the spotless purity of his character, were convicted of their own sins, and made strong to forsake them. The very lowest looked up from their degradation, beheld him, and took new hope. From the far-off lands into which they had wandered, where they made their beds with the swine, prodigals saw his light shining to guide them back to the house of their Father. Every-

where men looked at him and read anew the meaning of life. They looked and became strong for endeavor. To that life we turn from the bewilderments and temptations of the present. Like a clear star shining amid clouds, its light will not lead us astray. It is said of General Sheridan that his family always had an abiding faith in the power of Phil to compel victory on all occasions. The great commander, in all his career, was never so cornered by the rebels, but that he could easily escape, they were confident. When the word of the defeat of Sheridan's troops at Cedar Creek was carried to his mother, she did not believe it. Being assured that it was certainly true, she at last admitted that the troops might have been driven back by Early's men; but if so Phil was not there. They would never have moved an inch if he had been. Within a short time the true story of Sheridan's ride to Cedar Creek was told her, and how her boy had turned defeat into glorious victory. "Well," said Mrs. Sheridan, "didn't I tell you that if Phil's troops were whipped, he was not there! I could always depend upon Phil." In like manner the world has come to believe that, in the moral and spiritual leadership and captaincy of Christ, there is something upon which we may always depend. The force of his influence is not yet spent; it is mighty to-day, not to abrogate law; not to abolish penalty; but to draw us from sin

and discord into harmony with law. The penalty only ceases when we are emancipated from sin. Christ is not righteous in our stead; he incites us to righteousness.

III. And this brings us round the circle back to the point from which we started, and shows us how in a universe of law, there may be love and moral inspiration; how, with obedience as the goal, there may be wise and tender influences to bring us to obedience,—to bring us into harmony with God and with his laws. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." And these are some of the means by which we are led from rebellion into loyalty, from transgression into submission, from sin to God.

Let us understand that not a single law has been abrogated, that the standard of the moral life has never been lowered, that no human being has been freed from responsibility, that no one has rendered an obedience to God that will count for us, that no device has been invented by the Divine governor through which we may escape the consequences of our sins and cheat eternal justice. Each one stands for himself before God. Every man shall bear his own burden. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." I wish that these words could be engraved with a pen of fire upon every heart.

I wish that these words could be made the text

of every revival that is started in our city. Instead of encouraging people to believe that their responsibilities can be shifted and that God lays the lash for what they have done of meanness and fraud and falsehood upon the back of his own best beloved Son,—I would that the better and more robust doctrine could be taught that in God's government no guilty soul escapes, that even if that soul could take the wings of the morning and fly to the remotest star, there would the dread avenger confront him; that the only salvation to be taught is salvation from sin; that the only righteousness that avails is personal and not imputed.

By all means let us have such revivals. Let us have a revival that shall first of all strip away the garb of ignorance and vulgarity in which the professional revivalist is himself too often clothed. By all means, let us have revivals, and let them be so powerful that they will burn out hatred and envy and backbiting and bigotry and jealousy in the churches themselves; that will make a religion worth having at home before we export it to the heathen; that will make us just and fair in our dealings with them before we seek their conversion. Let us have revivals of conscience, of pure living, of high ideals, of truthfulness, honesty, self-denial, private and civic virtue; let us have revivals of right morals in business that shall sweep

through office and store, through counting-room and market-place, and lift men everywhere to the lofty level of the golden rule! Let us have a revival based upon this text, whose organizing idea shall be practical righteousness. Over such a revival earth would rejoice and the very angels of heaven would bend with gladdened faces. The result of such a revival would be to establish in all hearts a confidence that "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

XV.

"WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"

[Sunday Morning, January 24, 1892.]

"*What must I do to be saved?*"—ACTS, 16:30.

According to the account that has been handed down, that was a strange, wild scene in the Philippian jail out of which this cry sounded,— a cry as of a startled bird at night. Paul and Silas were making their cells vocal with song, when lo! the shock of an earthquake. The ground heaves beneath them like the waves of a sea; the strong walls reel and totter; the prison doors fly open. The jailor, suddenly aroused from sleep, thinks that the prisoners have escaped. Out flashes his sword from its scabbard; he will kill himself rather than be disgraced before the authorities. "Do thyself no harm," cries Paul, "for we are all here." Trembling, the jailer falls down before them, exclaiming: "What must I do to be saved?"

Let us not suppose that this frightened official was asking the way of salvation in a religious sense. His nerves were shaken by the startling events of the night. He was as one roused in an instant from a terrible dream to a more terrible reality. His question was a hysterical demand how he should be saved from the authorities when

they found the prison doors swinging loose on their hinges. Bodily safety was undoubtedly what he had in mind, so far as he had anything in mind,—anything definite. But Paul tries to sooth him. With infinite tact he diverts his attention from anticipated punishment. The form of the question gives him an opportunity to preach the very gospel for which he had been thrown into that prison. He bids the distracted officer think not of the safety of his person, but of the salvation of his soul. "What must I do to be saved?" exclaims the jailer in his terror. Paul's heart was a fountain filled with the thought of the matchless life that had touched and transformed his own; and how natural it was that when he heard the word "saved" in any connection, the answer he gave should spontaneously well up: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Let us use the question to-day as it is commonly employed, not as it was originally uttered,—the cry of one in a frenzy of fear,—but as the intelligent inquiry of an earnest spirit.

Let us imagine that we are quietly conversing together, and one of you says: "I feel that my life is not what it should be. I am conscious that I have often done wrong when I knew what was right; that I have wilfully gone astray when the path of duty was plain before me. I am depressed and cast down by my moral failures and by my

sins. If this is being lost, what must I do to be saved?"

Very good; but we must understand each other. There is a prior question. There is something to be settled first. I ask—

I. FROM WHAT DO YOU WISH TO BE SAVED?

You use the expression of the old jailer. I have suggested that, in the confusion of the night, he did not attach much meaning to it. But what do *you* mean? From what do *you* want to be saved? It all depends upon clearly stating your idea.

"Well," you answer, "I know that I have sinned, and I feel that God is angry with the wicked and hates them. I want you to tell me how to be saved *from his wrath.* This is my desire."

Now, I want to tell you that there is not and cannot be any such thing in God as you and I understand by wrath. It is true He has expressed his disapprobation of sin in the consequences which follow the violation of his laws in the soul, the body, the universe. But this is done in love to correct evil, to turn men aside from sin, and not in frenzy. His bolts are not hurled in vengeance, as men retaliate upon each other. He does not delight in destruction. When his laws smite us in their operation, it is to heal and not to kill. The sword falls with the glitter of lightning, but also with the glow of sunrise upon its blade. Let us be sure that we can never receive harm from God.

Think of Him no longer as the tornado, twisting from their places and hurling down to destruction all things fair and beautiful; not as a tiger ravaging the forests; not as a Nero, cold and cruel, delighting in torture. Never shall we receive hurt or mischief from God. It is not from wrath that we are to be saved; there is no wrath that renders such salvation necessary.

"The ancient gods are dead.
No Roman despot sits on heaven's throne,
Dispensing favors by his will alone;
Sends some to heaven and some to lowest hell,
In unprogressive woe or bliss to dwell;
Demands no horrid sacrifice of blood,
Nor nails his victims to the cruel wood
In others' guilty stead.

"The ancient gods are dead.
Law rules majestic in the courts above,
And has no moods, but hand in hand with love,
Sweeps thro' the universe, and smiling sees
The spheres obedient to her vast decrees,
Proclaims all men the sons not slaves of God.
And breathes the message of his Fatherhood.
The True God is not dead."

"But," you say, "I may not have been happy in expressing myself. Perhaps I ought to say that it is *the justice of God* from which I desire to be saved. This may be the better word."

The justice of God? Saved from the justice of God? Why, my hope is that equal and exact justice will at last be done everywhere and to all men. Strange that we should want to be deliv-

ered from this attribute of God and its operations, unless we are consciously trying to outwit and defraud him. The trouble is, we have interpreted brutality and fiendishness into our conception of justice, and stand trembling before our own caricature. Justice renders to each his due at last,—nothing more, nothing less. Justice metes out to each transgression and disobedience a fair recompense of reward,—a "just" recompense. Saved from the justice of God? Why, God's justice has been the hope of the oppressed in all ages. It is the hope of those who are trodden down today. It will work in this world and the next, until all wrongs are righted, till that which is crooked shall have been made straight, till the hills are leveled and the valleys exalted.

We sing with Whittier—

> "We only know that God is just,
> And every wrong shall die."

We exclaim with Queen Catharine—

> "Well, Heaven's above us still; there sits a Judge
> No king can corrupt."

"But," you say, "perhaps I have not yet gotten at the thing I mean. *It is the penalty of sin* from which I wish to be saved."

Exactly so; that is what I was thinking all the time. You want me to assure you that you will not suffer for your sins. You want me to tell you how the pain and anguish and disgrace attending

sin may be removed. You want to know how the burden of remorse shall be lifted from your conscience. You want to know how your boat may play upon the current of Niagara above the falls, without taking a plunge over the awful precipice. But this is precisely what cannot be done. *There is no salvation from the penalty of sin*, in itself considered.

I hear it said sometimes: "O, Mr. Shutter preaches that you may do as you like, and there is no punishment." It is surprising how people who never hear me preach know so much better than I do *what* I preach. It is hardly excusable that the doctrines of this church should be so grossly misunderstood and misrepresented. People have an idea of what we teach, or ought to teach, and will not have it modified by anything we can say. There was a very good minister once who had used the same hymn-book for so many years that he became greatly attached to it. One day some of the small boys in the congregation took the book and pasted the ballad of "Old Father Grimes" between the leaves. The next Sunday the clergyman opened at this very place, read a line or two, stopped, rubbed his spectacles, began again, stopped and said: "Brethren I have used this hymn-book now twenty years. I never found this hymn before, but it is here and I know it is all right. We'll sing it if it kills us!" Well,

people seem to have it down in black and white that we do not believe in punishment, and they will stick to it if it kills them. I have said ten thousand times that every evil thought, every unkind word, every unmanly deed, will bring, here or hereafter, its just and equitable penalty. It is as certain as sunlight or gravitation. No atonement of blood, no substitutionary sacrifice, no transfer of righteousness or guilt, can stand between the sinner and the lash! The thing you ask for, therefore, *salvation from penalty*, is the very thing that, in this church, we cannot promise.

Now, if you have run your round, and ask me: "From what, then, are we to be saved?" I will tell you, as best I am able.

Let us take a few illustrations from the New Testament. The disciples on one occasion had a dispute about place and position in the kingdom of heaven. Their personal ambitions were making havoc with their spiritual growth. So Jesus tells them that unless they put their miserable strifes and consuming ambitions away, and become as little children, they cannot even enter the kingdom of heaven,—to say nothing about attaining prominence there! The young man who came asking the way of eternal life, was told that he must be delivered from selfishness. The scribe must cease despising his neighbor; the publican must wash his hands so clean that none of the

taxes he gathered should stick to his fingers,—he must put away dishonesty and become honest; the fallen must be rescued from impurity.

What do these illustrations show? *That we must be delivered from sin;* and especially from that form of sin which so easily besets us. Paul says: "Putting away lying, speak every man truth to his neighbor." That is the salvation a liar needs. "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor." That is the salvation a thief needs. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good." That is the salvation the foul-mouthed need. "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving." That is the salvation that harsh and bitter spirits always need. Wrong thoughts and wrong deeds,—these are the devils to be exorcised; these are the flames to bequenched. These are the things from which we must be saved.

There is no one in this universe whom we need fear but ourselves. You remember the legend of the giant specter in the Alps. Many were terrified by the formidable apparition. But upon examination it was found to be the huge shadow of the person who saw it. Hell is but the black shadow of the evil heart. Make that evil heart

good, and the future is filled with a vision of Paradise.

Sin, therefore, is the thing from which we must be saved.

> "To be saved is only this—
> Salvation from our selfishness,
> From more than elemental fire,
> The soul's unsanctified desire;
> From sin itself, and not the pain
> That warns us of its chafing chain."

From this hell, I proclaim a possible deliverance!

II. Now comes the other question: "WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?" Show me the way out. Show me how I am to escape the bondage in which I find myself, the burdens that weigh upon me. Show me now I shall be saved from my wrong thoughts and wrong conduct.

Let us read the answer Paul made to the wild and wandering exclamation of the Philippian jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But you ask: "What does that mean?" You tell me there are so many explanations of it that you know not which is right.

I am asked whether belief in Christ means belief in any special theory of his origin or nature or rank, and I say "No,—one may believe in the most stringent theories about Christ and yet be none the better." A man may believe in the rules of arithmetic, and yet not be able to count. One may believe that there are twenty-six letters in the al-

phabet, and yet not be able to put half a dozen of them together, so as to spell a simple word correctly. One may believe that Jesus was the very God himself, and that belief may have no influence whatever upon his daily life. The belief that revolutionizes character is something more.

I am asked whether it means belief in any special philosophy of his work. Must I come and kneel to him and say, " O Master, appease in my behalf the Father's wrath, get my punishment annulled, secure for me the divine favor, bring me to everlasting happiness." Is that what it means? Again, I answer "No." There never raged a wrath in heaven against the inhabitants of earth that needed to be quenched in innocent blood. Neither do we need an intercessor to plead with God to be merciful. When petitions are to be presented to an earthly monarch, they must be borne by some one high in favor with the king. Not so our Father in heaven. Each one—the humblest and weakest of his subjects, may come into his immediate presence, and needs not the intervention of some one who stands higher in his regard. There is no alienation on the part of God that demands the transaction of the soul's affairs through some ambassador upon the one side or attorney upon the other. Face to face we may speak!

What, then, is meant, when it is said: "Believe

on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved?" Let me give you an illustration. Some of you saw the war drama, the "Shenandoah," at the Grand Opera House last week. In the third act, the retreat of the Union troops from Cedar Creek is shown. They are beaten back by the enemy, leaving the dead and the wounded along the path of defeat. The flag is furled, the artillery wheeled backward unloaded. All at once the sergeant, standing on an eminence, descries in the distance a dark object moving rapidly along the road. It is Sheridan upon his war steed. He sets up the shout: "Sheridan is coming! Sheridan is coming!" Others catch the words as they are sounded along the line: "Sheridan is coming!" What a change comes over the spirits of the repulsed and beaten army. The retreat is stopped. Every man turns right about and grasps his musket with a firmer hand. And when the intrepid general dashes among them he leads them to a glorious triumph and retrieves the shattered fortunes of the day. What wrought the transformation?

Faith, a saving faith in the military sense. Every man in that army believed in Phil. Sheridan, believed in his generalship, believed in him as victory incarnate; and the soldierly qualities in Sheridan made a soldier of every man in the ranks. He saved them by the inspiration of his personality. If the soldiers had stopped to dis-

pute with each other, they might have found many questions about their commander to engender strife. They might have debated about his birth-place, his father and mother, many of the incidents of his life, whence he derived the power that made him what he was, how he got his ability to command. If they had followed the example of many Christian people in their controversies about Christ, they would never have become soldiers, and they never would have won a battle. But by coming under the influence of one who embodied all the elements that make a hero, by putting their trust in him, by believing that his name was a synonym for daring and success, they themselves became heroic. They could not have become brave by studying the art of war or practicing military tactics; it was necessary for them to see soldierly virtue incarnated and in action. Thus seeing it and associating with it, it stimulated and developed the soldierly virtues in their own bosoms. It is but one illustration of the great principle that runs through all human life. The word must become flesh and dwell among us before we behold and are moved by its glory. It is only another way of saying that precepts must be translated into character before they make character in others.

This example will help us to answer the question: What is the belief in Christ that saves? It

is belief in such a life as he led; belief in the things for which he stood; belief in the purity and goodness and love which he exemplified. Prof. Momerie says that "there is and can be but one all-comprehensive synonym for Christ—namely, righteousness." To believe in the things which Christ embodied; to believe in his life as the highest life; to believe in his character as the noblest character; to believe this with all one's heart will lift him out of his sins into the sphere of honor and love and usefulness. The salvation of Jesus proceeds upon a perfectly natural and wide-reaching principle. It is not arbitrary, mechanical or miraculous. Truth worked out in a life—all high and holy qualities expressed in a character,—this is what touches and exalts.

I was impressed by reading a short time ago an account that some one gave of his first meeting with Dr. Thomas Hill of Harvard:

"As I went my way home, I discovered that somehow a new brightness had got into the sunshine. I was conscious of new visions and other aims. Meditating upon him, he stood before me as one who from the greatness of his riches could appropriate them to the most every-day uses, whose personal greatness was of the noble kind that, so far from overpowering, lifts up the feebler brother, something as a strong man may lift a child into his arms, where he, too, may see the spectacle

of which his lowly stature had denied him vision."

It is the same kind of quickening, though greater in degree, that one receives in the atmosphere of Christ. Our low aims and selfish ambitions melt away and life takes on new glory and power.

He sets before us our ideal. He shows what is to be done, what we ought to become. In the Greek legend, Eurydice, the wife of Orpheus, was fatally bitten by a serpent and carried down to Hades. There Orpheus sought her with his golden lyre, with his music putting Cerberus, the three-headed watch-dog, to sleep and softening the inexorable Pluto to consent to her release. The consent, however, was coupled with the condition that Orpheus was to lead her out, not turning to look upon her till they had reached the upper world of light and joy, of flowers and sunshine. But Orpheus could not keep the condition. He turned to look back upon his wife and beheld her snatched away forever into the realms of darkness. The music of Christ's words,—words spoken with authority, sounds through all the dark places of earth, through every life of sin, bidding us look forward and upward, never backward, leading us to where the beautiful light of heaven plays upon the summits of moral achievement, of deliverance from sin.

We are saved not only by believing in the ideal thus set before us, but also by believing in the

possibility of reaching that ideal. It is nothing impossible that is set before us. We shall often fail and be discouraged; but we must press on. For the last few days the sun has been playing around the edges of winter. Here and there the fetters of the frost have been loosed; here and there the snow has given way. But this is not the end of winter. In all probability the thermometer will go down again; other snow-storms will come. This is not the end, but this is a prophecy. Spring may be far off, but it is coming. So in human life. It may be long before the sun of righteousness triumphs, but its dominion is assured.

It is related that a German with a trained musical ear came a stranger into an American city. He heard the voice of song, and following the sound, he soon found himself in a meeting where they were singing psalmody in a nasal and discordant way. After he had got fairly in there, he wished he was out, and he did not know whether he ought to put his hands over his ears and show his disgust so, or rush out of the hall, but being too well bred to do either, he determined to endure it as best he could. And while he was sitting there, he discerned a woman's voice, clear and sweet, singing in exact tune, and she was not trying to drown all the rest down either. Nor, on the other hand, was she at all disturbed or her melody at all marred by the discords around her.

but she just kept singing that sweet, pure note of concord, until at last it became infectious and the others began to fall in with it, and it was not long before the whole company were singing in perfect harmony, influenced by the example of that one voice.

So shall the voice of Jesus at last conquer with the melody of the skies, all our earthly discords, and bring our hearts into accord with the harmony divine. This is our hope, this is our firm faith, and the strength of this conviction shall deliver our souls at last.

What, then, shall I do to be saved? Study the life that Christ led, believe in it, and try to live it; believe in it so that you will try to live it. Any other kind of belief in him is empty and fruitless. Such a life as he lived *is* salvation.

XVI.

THE LIBERAL FAITH AS A BASIS OF CHARACTER.

[Sunday Evening, February 7, 1892.]

"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."—MATT. 7:18.

That many forms of belief which have held wide sway in Christendom, are doomed, goes almost without the saying. The walls of many creeds are crumbling, the foundations giving way. The various movements in favor of revision of old statements are very significant. What shall come when these have fallen? What new structures shall rise above their ruins? What new forms of faith will take hold on human minds? There must be no reign of chaos. Night and anarchy must not prevail. Something else must be provided—something brighter and better and stronger. The unsettling is at hand; the casting off is certain. What shall be our attitude? The hero in one of Turgenief's novels says: "But isn't it necessary to rebuild? That does not concern us. Before all things, it is necessary to clear the ground." It is necessary to clear the ground, but it is also necesary to rebuild. The man who really cares for

the welfare of his fellows must set himself at work to discover or construct something better. Let who will be the breaker, it is for him to create. It is easy to reduce beliefs and all things else to a condition described by the words, "without form and void," To send the Spirit of God over the face of the dark waters, breathing life and beauty and majestic form into the chaos, is not so easy. But it is the real work. It is the great problem before the liberal thinker. It calls for earnestness of purpose, singleness of aim, and depth of moral conviction.

The faith that is represented in all liberal churches puts the emphasis upon CHARACTER. I remember that during the latter part of my ministry on the other side of the river, a good brother said to me one day, "You are beginning to preach like the Universalists and Unitarians; you talk too much about character, and not enough about the 'blood.'" I did not at that time perceive the drift of my own preaching, but I remember I thought it somewhat strange that any one should object to a minister's laying great weight upon personal character.

President Andrews, of Brown University, said, in a recent number of the Baptist *Examiner:*

"Every religious body has some theory of the way in which men are to be made happy in another world. Of the churches this is eminently true, pre-eminently of those called evangelical,

which still make up the great majority. Now, in these churches, little as we may like to admit it, and earnestly as the keenest-sighted religious teachers in them deplore it, the ordinary doctrine of salvation is one which sunders virtue and religion almost as completely as ever any heathen faith did. Practically, righteousness is not made an essential, inevitable condition to the weal and bliss for which saints hope and pray."

As one has well expressed it, the liberal denominations "have laid stress on character as the highest aim of life, the great work of the Gospel, the Alpha and Omega of true religion. Undeterred by the cry that they were teaching 'mere morality,' * * * they have maintained that the purpose of the Gospel was not to save the soul from a future hell, but to cause the kingdom of God to come here, and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. They have declared that we were not to prepare to die, but to prepare to live, for if we live aright, we shall always be ready to die." Or, as another has put it, "In the possession of a consecrated character, in the eloquence of a life that is lived with God, is the one thing that can make people sure that there is a living God. There is but one real proof of life, and that is life itself." Character is the highest aim. To develop in rounded completeness and symmetry the highest and noblest part of his nature—to endeavor to

become perfect even as the Father in heaven is perfect—may well enlist man's profoundest thought and call forth his intensest energies.

The question, therefore, that meets him upon the threshold is, What form of faith is best adapted to this tremendous end? In the doctrines set forth and advocated by liberal churches, are there those elements that tend to produce strong and beautiful, manly and womanly characters? I shall let an eminent orthodox clergyman help us to an answer. Rev. J. H. Barrows, D. D., a distinguished Presbyterian, of Chicago, said last year in the *Independent:*

"Between Orthodoxy and Unbelief appears that form of doctrine which we know as Christian Liberalism. It does not embrace any large portion of nominal Christendom; it has had spasms of prosperity now and then in the past. It does not appear to-day as an organized body of belief, but rather as a number of small churches and associations of churches *composed of excellent men* who have not found a home in evangelical denominations and who are still more repelled by the spirit and attitude of infidelity. There is little unity in their ranks, except, perhaps, in rejecting the orthodox escatology. *Most of them are active in charitable works.* It is not usual for them to emphasize the doctrine of sin and sacrificial atonement and regeneration, and hence they are not

often engaged in revival activity. *They have produced many noble characters*, they stand as critics at the door of orthodoxy, and doubtless have modified, to a certain degree, the evahgelical teachings of the past."

I trust we shall see that there is more unity than Dr. Barrows credits us with; but it is gratifying to hear him use such terms in describing us as "excellent men," "active in charitable works," "have produced many noble characters," and also to hear his confession, in spite of much said to the contrary, that we have "modified to a certain degree, the evangelical teachings of the past." This may explain why our growth as separate bodies has not been larger. The temperature of evangelical churches is so cooling off that they are becoming more comfortable for all shades of opinion.

A good tree can not bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. The kind of men and women produced must at length decide the kind of principles and institutions that produced them. By their fruits ye shall know them. Let us not shrink from the test.

I do not mean to say that the elements I am about to mention are not found elsewhere—far from that. I mean to say simply that they are prominent and vital in the Liberal Faith—that they characterize it. They are not sporadic and

exceptional; they are absolutely essential. And I call upon all those who profess to be emancipated from the bondage of severer creeds to strive for higher attainments, for grander lives. Liberality does not mean looseness.

1. At the basis of all true and right character lies *sincerity*. This foundation virtue the Liberal Faith demands beyond everything else.

It says to every man, "Be fully persuaded in your own mind," no matter what the persuasion. It encourages no evasions or mental reservations. It warns every man against placing himself or allowing himself to be placed, in a false position. "Thou desirest truth in the inward part." It forbids him, for the sake of social position, business advantages, opinions of his friends or any other consideration, to give his assent, directly or by implication, to a creed or party in which he does not believe with his whole heart. It says to him, "Stand where you belong; be true to your own light, and not to another man's; suppress nothing; speak yourself fully and bravely out." "This above all, to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

The Liberal Faith does not seek, by any ecclesiastical machinery or threats of Divine interference, to coerce men into this or that belief. It does not say unto them, Unless your views and

your conduct harmonize with certain prescribed standards, you are forever lost. No lash of terror is cracked about the ears of men to scare them into doctrines against which their inmost convictions rebel. The hideous fiction of an eternal inquisition for those whose views differ, even in vital and essential respects, from certain formularies, has done much to produce cowardice and falsehood. Men have shrunk from investigation; have smothered doubts which might have led them to clearer light and more solid footing as if they were suggestions of infamy; have said, "I will do thus and I will think so, or God will punish me for ever and ever." There is no hope for any one until he can say, "Hell or no hell, I will be an honest man; whither my best light leads me I will go, let the consequences be what they may!"

Here and there a superior mind has broken away, and recorded its deliverance in a sublime sentence. Said John Stuart Mill, "I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply this epithet to my fellow-creatures, and if such being can sentence me to hell, for not so believing him, then to hell I will go!" Leigh Hunt declared that he would not believe the doctrine of eternal perdition, though an angel from heaven preached it. "It would be easier to believe the angel mistaken than God monstrous."

I do not wish to be misunderstood. I am not

charging those who hold different views with dishonesty. I am affirming that the tendency of such a doctrine, of such a fear, is to deter men from free investigation and untrammeled thought, for dread of the consequences if they do not reach, in their thought and investigation, a certain conclusion.

Opinions, characters, hopes builded upon fear, or mainly upon fear, are lacking in heartfelt sincerity, and will fall at last as the house of which Jesus spake, that was builded on the sand. This is one reason why so many people converted in revivals have to be converted over again the next winter. Under the influence of a temporary panic they rush to the altar; but when the fear departed, they go back to their old habits. Their last state is even worse than the first. The liberal faith strives to remove from men's minds the bondage which prevents, in so many cases, complete ingenuousness. It says to them, "Be honest! Whatever may meet the divine displeasure, God is always pleased with sincerity. He does not delight in cowardice or falsehood." But the Liberal Faith does not leave man without motive. For the lower and dwarfing motive of fear, it substitutes the nobler and grander motive of love—love to God and to all mankind. There is a story that, "A century ago in the north of Europe stood an old cathedral upon one of whose arches was a

sculptured face of wondrous beauty. It was long hidden, until one day the sun's light striking through a slanted window revealed the matchless features. And ever after, year by year, upon the days when for a brief hour it was thus illuminated, crowds came and waited eagerly to catch but a glimpse of that face. It had a strange history. When the cathedral was building, an old man, broken with the weight of years and care, came and besought the architect to let him work upon it. Out of pity for his age, but fearful lest his failing sight and trembling touch might mar some fair design, the master set him to work in the shadows of the vaulted roof. One day they found the old man asleep in death, the tools of his craft laid in order beside him, the cunning of his right hand gone, his face upturned to this other marvelous face he had wrought there—the face of one whom he had loved and lost in his early manhood. And when the artists and sculptors and workmen from all parts of the cathedral came and looked upon that face, they said, 'This is the grandest work of all—love wrought this.'" And so in the work we do in our own characters and in the world, that is best and strongest and grandest which is wrought under the inspiration of love—love for God, love for those who bear his image.

2. A true character must be a *rounded* one. The more of himself a man uses, the better the

result as a whole. Every power must be brought out, every faculty must be called into play.

Man's reason as well as emotion must be used. If must be introduced into religion as well as into secular affairs. Man's "weak and erring and darkened reason" is a popular theme. The tendency is to repress instead of training and fitting it for its God-like mission. Thinking for one's self is stigmatized as treason against God. Others say that one may use his reason if using it brings him to a certain result; but not if his reason leads him to reject the doctrine of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the infallibility of Scripture, the sacrificial theory of the Atonement. In that case, your reason must be suppressed. It then becomes too haughty and overweening for such a poor, dishonored thing. Only use your reason when it brings you into our camp. Prof. Fisher admits that "it is sometimes seen that the most ardent advocates of men's responsibility for their opinions are ready to wield the weapons of denunciation and threatening where there is the least whisper of dissent from traditional doctrines. They sound the trumpet, whet their swords, and rally their adherents from every side for the purpose of stifling honest discussion, and of frightening the timid into silence or into conformity." The Liberal Faith says, One's religion must satisfy his reason; not suppress it. Every power God has given

must be used. The real traitor against God is he who casts contempt upon his handiwork—who refuses to trust the revelation he has made in the human soul. The liberal churches are never convulsed over a new idea. They are hospitable to truth from whatever quarter.

3. No strong character can be developed unless emphasis be laid upon the thought of *personal responsibility*.

True men and women must feel their freedom and ability; they are not simply the creatures of heredity and circumstances. They have power over their own souls and lives. We must realize that we are responsible for our own sin, and that we ourselves must cease from sin. Adam, in the old story, tried to lay the blame of his transgression on Eve. The theologians have well paid him back for his lack of gallantry; for, ever since that, they have been laying the blame for us all upon Adam. We have derived from him a corrupt nature, and some say that the guilt which he incurred is imputed to us. The doctrine is thus stated in one of the creeds: "Man was created in holiness under the law of his Maker; but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state, in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint, but choice, being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God; positively inclined to evil; and, therefore,

under just condemnation to eternal ruin without defense or excuse.' Thus we get our start in sin, and find ourselves helpless for anything but sin. We are told in another statement of the same denomination: "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so, as a natural man, being altogether averse to that good and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself or prepare himself thereunto." He is not even responsible for his own temptations. A devil has been invented to lift that burden from human shoulders. The only way out of this state of evil and bondage lies through the atonement, by which our sins are imputed to Christ, and his righteousness to us. But even here the sovereign will of God determines that only a part of humanity shall have the benefit of this atonement. The rest are left to suffer the penalty of sins for which they were not responsible, and from which they had no power to escape.

Over against this doctrine of original corruption and final injustice, this doctrine of helplessness in evil and righteousness by transfer, the Liberal Faith says: You are free and responsible. Man makes his own sin and his own righteousness. Character is not transferable. Christ owed his own debt to God, and could not pay yours or mine. He was under obligation to keep the moral

law for himself, just as you and I are under obligation to keep it. He could perform no works of supererogation that might be credited to us. We may have to help us the example of Christ, the inspiration of his life, the guidance of his words, but we must work out our own salvation. One of Richter's characters exclaims: "I will, in the sea of the world, rise like a living man by swimming, and not like a drowned man by corruption. Yes, father, let fate cast a gravestone on this breast, and crush it, when it has lost virtue and the divinity of its own heart." The Liberal Faith takes off the chains in which theology has bound man, and says to him: "You can, you must. Do! Dare!" Man cannot grow morally strong any more than he can grow strong intellectually and physically, until he has been thrown upon his own resources and made to feel his own responsibility.

The lesson of personal responsibility is the need of the hour. The sin of Adam cannot work our ruin; the holiness of Christ cannot take the place of our own obedience. For woe or for weal, the responsibility is with us.

> "So near is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man,
> When duty whispers low, You must,
> The youth replies, I can."

4. There is another element of the Liberal Faith that is of value in the development of character—*its doctrine of retribution.*

The charge is frequently made that liberal Christianity underestimates sin, and leaves out its penalty. No charge could be more unfounded. In an article on human destiny, in a recent book entitled, "The Unknown Country," Washington Gladden has this remarkable passage: "My own belief is that the real terrors of the law are now more clearly announced from the Universalist pulpit than from the pulpits of our most orthodox teachers. Not long ago, after I had been preaching on this subject, a very intelligent man, now an active member of an orthodox church, said to me: 'That is an awful truth. I heard it just in the same way once before and it was the first time that I was ever startled and alarmed about my sins. I had heard many sermons on punishment, but this was the first one that frightened me and made me feel my need of deliverance and salvation, and that sermon,' added my friend, 'was preached in a Universalist church by a Universalist minister.' It is very true that the force of this teaching is neutralized in Universalist pulpits by the dogmatic assertion that all men, somehow or other, in spite of themselves, are going to be saved by and by; but the fact remains that these teachers do see and set forth in vigorous fashion the consequences of sin."

The concession of Mr. Gladden is so full and frank, that it may seem ungenerous even to sug-

gest a slight correction. No Universalist holds that anyone will be saved "in spite of himself." Everyone must be saved willingly, and will be, even in the next world; and by the same processes which save us here.

Even greater stress is laid upon the exceeding sinfulness of sin when it is shown to be voluntary and not constrained; even more impressive is its penalty when it is shown to be instant and exact, not deferred and disproportioned. The writer of the book of Ecclesiastes said that "the hearts of the sons of men were fully set in them to do evil, because sentence against an evil work was not speedily executed." Delay the reckoning and you increase the sinner's impunity. Sin carries it punishment with it, so long as sin continues, in this world, or the remotest quarter of the universe. It does not await its sentence till some future day of judgment; here and now and continuous is the reckoning. The laws of this wondrous universe, the laws of the human soul, are so marvellously adjusted that they bring the thrill of pain or the crown of life the moment they are violated or obeyed. These laws do not wait for pealing trumpet or chariot of returning Judge. In pang of conscience, in sense of degradation, in diminished manhood, in enfeebled will, in impaired body, is the sentence executed. In the peace of God, in ennobled character, is heard the word, "Well

done, good and faithful servant!" The only way to escape penalty is to cease from sin.

The children were playing in the yard. Mamma sat sewing by the window, and overheard the following conversation. Charlie spoke first.

"Do you feel real mean when you do anything wrong, Helen?"

"I never thought about it," replied Helen.

"Don't you ever feel kind of hot and on fire from your head clear down to your feet?"

"No, I don't know as I do."

"Well, I tell you I do," went on Charlie, reflectively. "First my head gets all hot and my face red, and I feel awfully, as if I were going to burn up; and the feeling keeps spreading and spreading until I tingle clear down into my fingers and toes. And Helen," he added, after two or three vicious digs into the earth, "I just believe that's hell."

And that is hell,—here and hereafter. The fires of shame and remorse are the fire and brimstone that burn us; and they will burn until that which brings the shame is utterly and forever consumed.

5. Into a character that would be symmetrically and fully developed, must enter the thought of the *oneness of life.*

Religion is one with business and pleasure as well as with worship. God is served in honest weight and measure, as well as in prayer and an-

them. His altar is by the fireside as well as in the sanctuary. Life is one. There are no petty provinces over which petty princes rule. One is king, God. · His kingdom is the secular as well as the sacred. The universe is one stuff. Table of counting-room and ark of covenant are hewn from the same tree. Drapery of parlor and robe of angel are cut from the same fabric. The Liberal Faith draws no fanciful distinction between natural goodness and spiritual. All goodness is natural and all goodness spiritual. Sentiments of justice and mercy are just the same before what is called "conversion" as they are after. The love that bends over the cradle is as holy as that which inspires the song of the elders! The Liberal Faith identifies this life and the next. "Everything, even heaven and hell, are of this earth," said a disciple of Plato. Life is one; and death is but a larger incident in an endless career. It works no marvelous changes, nor does it give an unalterable direction to the faculties. Death is not so important an event as we used to think it. It sets us down across the boundary, just as we close our eyes upon this side of the horizen. It terminates one epoch of life only to begin at the same point, another and better. Life is one, in all its departments; life is one here and hereafter.

6. One's character will also be more or less influenced by his *thought of God, of man, and of human destiny.*

He who wishes to live conscientiously will try to be what his conception of God demands. Lowell sings:

"As their Gods were, so their laws were,
Thor, the strong, could reave and steal,
So thro' many a peaceful inlet,
Tore the Norseman's eager keel.

"But a new law came when Christ came,
And not blameless as before,
Can we, paying him our lip-tithes,
Give our life and faith to Thor."

Our treatment of men will also be somewhat determined by the views we take of human brotherhood. The Liberal Faith emphasizes the thought that men are brothers. The race sprung from one Father, one family in the beginning, bound together by so many ties of suffering, of aspiration, of joy, will be one in its destiny.

"Master, if there be doom,
All men are bereaven,
If in the universe
One soul receive a curse,
Alas for heaven!"

Such a hope is surely an aspiration, and throwing a gleam of light across the sin, the sorrow and the ignorance of to-day, lifts up the hands that grow weary, and strengthens the feet that falter. The Liberal Faith keeps constantly before us,

"That God which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves."

Just outside the city of Geneva, are two rivers which come together; but the one to the left is muddy and turbid, while that to the right is clear as crystal. You can look down into its liquid depths, and clearly distinguish every object that lies at the bottom. Standing there upon that narrow neck of land, as far as the eye can reach, these two rivers move along side by side, as though divided by an invisible partition of glass. But if you go down the river a mile or two, you discover that the clear, limpid water is beginning to be tainted by the waters of the muddy stream. If you go down a little further, you find that the clear, crystal water is lost in the muddy, turbid stream. But go down the river a few miles further, and you find that the mud and filth and dirt are beginning to settle down to their native earth; the river has filtered as it flows. Then if you go down to where it pours its flood into the ocean, you will find the entire stream clear as crystal.

Two rivers are flowing through this world, and they are flowing to the Infinite ocean. The river of God's love is clear as crystal, and as it rolls along, the light sparkles on its bosom. Into that river flows another, the tide of human life, defiled and muddy. It seems sometimes as if the human stream would blot out the divine. They flow onward together, and the pure stream conquers at

last the foul. Somewhere in the eternal flood, somewhere in the great, deep sea, the human stream loses its defilement, and sparkles with the beauty of God!

By these principles men have lived and developed strong and manly characters. The beadroll of saints that will answer to the call of the views presented, will compare with that of any other calendar under the sun. Witness the Brookes, and Martineaus and Channings and Parkers and Emersons and Ballous and Chapins and hundreds of others who have honored the human race. Place the rank and file of the Liberal churches side by side with the rank and file of other churches, and for solidity of character, for every-day righteousness,—if not for emotional display and ecstatic fervor,—they need not shrink from the comparison. Yes, by this faith, men have lived and *do* live most gloriously. By this faith men have died, not in the agonies of remorse depicted by the popular tract and sermon; the hour of departure was calm and peaceful, and the spirits of these just men passed away as gently and beautifully as the fading of sunset from the evening sky. No grinning fiends danced gleefully by their bedsides. The vision of God grew brighter and brighter, until mortality was swallowed up of life!

"We stand," to use the language of another, "in

every community where a church of the Liberal Faith exists, for faith in the ever-living and ever-opening gospel—a gospel which existed long before any of the creeds that embody it, and will live long after they are all forgotten; a gospel which has no shackles for the body or the mind; which is not afraid of the geologist's hammer, the astronomer's tube, or the naturalist's microscope; which believes in man as God's inalienable child, and in Christ as God's free mercy, and in God as the universal Father, against whose mighty and eternal love neither Adam's sins nor ours can stand up as permanent barriers to its glorious, beneficent and universal course; a gospel of common sense, of generous sympathies, of broad charity, of practical beneficence, which claims to come from Christ's lips, which hopes to fold the whole world in its gentle arms, and which is not afraid to trust itself in life and in death, as the appointed way of salvation and the gate of eternal life."

These are

> "Truths which wake
> To perish never;
> And neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,
> Nor man nor boy,
> Nor aught that is at enmity with joy.
> Can utterly abolish or destroy."




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